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A SERIES

OF

FAMILIAR DISCOURSES

FOR EVERY

SUNDAY AND FESTIVAL

OF THE YEAR.



BY

THE REV. EDWARD PEACH.



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SERMONS.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON THE VICES OF THE TONGUE.

If any man think himself religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

JAMES i. 26.

THE inspired words of the Apostle, which I have selected for my text, refer to the same subject, which formed the substance of my discourse on Sunday last:—namely, the government of the tongue. And we are here informed, in stronger terms than in my preceding text, that, if we do not bridle our tongue, our religion is vain. However perfect we may be in other respects,—however mortified we may be in our other senses,—however frequently we may have recourse to

the sacraments, if we do not bridle our tongue, we are assured that our religion is vain.

These are strong words, and clearly indicate that the duty inculcated is of the highest importance. We will call your attention, therefore, to it again. On Sunday last I spoke only of the evil consequences arising from not keeping a proper guard over the tongue. On this day, I will call your attention to the vices of the tongue. This is the most important part of the subject. The flippancy of the tongue arises chiefly from the gaiety of the heart, and thoughtlessness of the mind: The vices of the tongue from depravity of disposition. I request, therefore, that they, to whom my reflections may be applicable, will endeavour to profit by them, and apply them solely to themselves. For, by so doing will they be enabled to correct their failings, in this respect, and will avoid the dreadful consequences attendant on those, whose religion is vain, or, whose religion will not profit them to life everlasting.

If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man. This is a sentence of the same Apostle, from whom I have taken my text. Universal experience teaches us that the great source of the evils, which afflict the world, arises from the tongue. From the tongue proceed cursing and blaspheming. From the tongue proceed detraction, calumny, and lying. From the tongue proceed too frequently the causes of hatred, animosity, and revenge.

From the tongue proceed quarrels, fighting, bloodshed, and sometimes murder. From the tongue proceed lascivious discourses, deceitful promises, artful insinuations, and the consequences proceeding from them. *The tongue, as the same Apostle says, is a fire, a world of iniquity; . . . a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* (Jas. iii.) Not that the tongue is a being of itself, the contriver and author of all these evils: for we all know, that the heart is the instigator of them. But, it is the tongue that gives vent to them. It is the tongue that causes the external evils. It is the tongue that does the mischief. Were we to be silent on those occasions, when corrupt nature alone calls upon us to speak, and when speaking would answer no good end, how few would be the evils, which are now so universally experienced! Were we, as my text on Sunday last advises us to be, *slow to speak, and slow to anger*, how seldom would there be any permanent disagreements between the children of men. The sensations, indeed, of anger, animosity, &c. would be felt interiorly; but, were perfect silence to be observed, how soon would those sensations be obliterated, and all appearance of dissension cease! How soon would differences be reconciled! how soon would animosity be cooled! In this respect, we may take an example from the brute creation, and say, that, were we voluntarily to sacrifice the privilege of speech, a faculty which they are not

allowed to enjoy, there would be as few lasting quarrels, or continued animosities amongst us, as there are amongst them. They have their evil propensities, and their selfish views : they have their quarrels, and their contentions for superiority. But they prolong not the strife by angry and reproachful words. All is ended as soon as the cause is removed, and not the least vestige of what has passed remains on either side. It is true that they have not the power of recollection like men. But were a man, particularly if he were guided by religious sentiments, to impose silence on himself on those trying occasions, we should find that there would be sufficient reason to justify the comparison. For example, were he to hold his peace when assailed with detraction and calumny, universal experience proves that, by so doing he would vindicate his character in the most effectual manner. When differences arise between him and others, either at home or abroad, we are well assured, that by observing silence, anger quickly subsides, and instead of hours being spent in wrangling, and animosities being enkindled, and hatreds excited, the offending party soon becomes convinced of his error, and recalls his words : a reconciliation takes place, and the serious consequences, which would otherwise have ensued, are avoided. Even when the emotions of anger begin to arise in his own breast, by silence they are easily overpowered :—when sensations of vain-

glory are felt, by silence they are repressed :—when temptations to deceit or treachery are experienced, by silence the evil consequences are avoided. It is the same with all other external evils which are generally caused or encreased by the too forward use of the tongue. Happy, therefore, would it be for mankind, were they to make a covenant with the tongue, never to speak when the passions are excited, or when speaking is likely to be attended with pernicious effects.

The pernicious effects may be reduced to these two : first, speaking what is injurious to the honour of God, and prejudicial to our neighbour ; and second, speaking on those occasions when you ought to foresee that your words will give offence, and cause dissensions.

In the first place, what greater abuse of speech can there be, than that which we daily and hourly witness—I mean swearing, cursing, and blaspheming ? This is an evil of the most extensive and worst kind. We witness it in men, women, and even children. We witness it in persons of all ranks and descriptions. We witness it, not only when passion has heated the mind beyond the bounds of reason, but in common conversation,—in the midst of smiles and pleasures.—Oh ! my brethren, this is a serious evil. If, as Truth itself declares, we shall have to give account for every idle word, (Matt. xii.) how severe will be the account that will be demanded for every oath,

for every curse! I have heard it said in respect of habitual swearers, that they mean no harm, and that they do not think of what they say. But this is a plea which will never be admitted as a palliation of their guilt. A Christian ought to think before he speaks. A Christian ought to have an habitual respect for the name of God, and an habitual watchfulness over his tongue. The man, therefore, who is grossly and habitually deficient in these points, possesses not the qualities which constitute the character of a Christian. And will this plead his excuse? Will it not rather add to his guilt, and prove that he is either criminally ignorant of his duties, or criminally inattentive to them? Oh! my brethren, you I mean who transgress in this point, enter seriously into yourselves, and labour with all earnestness to acquire a command over your tongue: for, according to my text, *if you do not bridle your tongue your religion is vain.*

Another abuse of speech, which we too frequently witness, is defamation and scandal. To judge from the conduct of the greater number of Christians, we should suppose that no restraint was laid on the tongue with respect to our neighbour's failings: we should suppose that the good name of our fellow-creatures might be sported with at pleasure, and no responsibility incurred.—In some people we witness a kind of natural itching for defamation. We cannot be in their company for five

minutes without hearing some piece of scandal or other. We cannot converse with them concerning any one, but they have something or other unfavourable to say. They have good memories for evil. No hearsay story is forgotten by them. Their minds are well stored with scandalous anecdotes of every one of their acquaintance. And, although it sometimes happens that, in the confusion occasioned by the collection of so much trash, they affix the story on the wrong person, it matters not to them: they go on without concern. Defamation is their predominant disposition, and scandal is their delight. They attack friend and foe, with this only difference—their friend they defame with a sneer of pity—their foe with the rancour of malice. And yet, many of these consider themselves as not deficient in the ways of virtue!—There are others, and of these the number is very great, who are not *always* transgressing in this point, but who can never witness a failing in a neighbour, or hear a scandalous tale, and observe silence. These people, when any thing of the kind occurs, impart the news to their intimate friends, without once reflecting on their own failings, or on the obligations of fraternal love. Some take delight in watching the conduct of those whom they do not love, or whom they envy: and when they see, or seem to see, any thing that is not strictly correct, blazon it forth with all freedom, and make it the common topic of

conversation amongst their acquaintance. It matters not to them what injury the person may receive, nor what scandal may be raised. And yet, they make very little scruple of conscience about it, but go on with the confident expectation of partaking of the rewards, which are promised only to those who love one another.—There are others, who are less criminal than the above, who are well aware of the enormity of the crime of defamation and scandal, and therefore, in their general conduct guard against it: nevertheless, from time to time, make sarcastic remarks upon their neighbours, canvass their actions, and expose their faults. Having no malice in their hearts, nor thinking of doing injury to others, they make their remarks without scruple, and endeavour not to restrain the tongues of others, when scandals are brought forward in their presence.—How many, my brethren, are there of each of these descriptions! or rather, how few are there to be found, who keep such a command over their tongues as not to offend in words! Look round amongst your acquaintance, and see whether you can find more than two or three, or some such small number, who are always on their guard, and who never transgress in this point?

Oh! my brethren, the evils produced by the tongue are incalculable. Truly, as St. James says, *If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man.*—I do not speak of the crimes

of slander, malicious lies, deceitful impositions, and other enormities of the tongue. They are crimes of too black a die to require comment. Those of which I have spoken above, are sufficient to show how extensive are the evils produced by the tongue, and how necessary it is to guard against them. Yes, my brethren, they are evils, against which you must be on your guard. To be virtuous in other respects, and not in this, will not ensure your salvation: for, as my text declares, *if any man think himself religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is vain.*

The second evil of the tongue, to which I wish to call your attention, is, speaking on those occasions when we ought to foresee that speaking will be attended with evil consequences. This occurs very frequently. Oftentimes it happens that men, meeting friendly together, enter into conversation, and by giving too great liberty to the tongue, give offence to each other, and cause quarrelling, fighting, deadly animosity, and hatred. Oftentimes it happens, that connexions are dissolved, old friendships broken off, relatives, who sincerely loved each other, set at variance by untimely remarks, by ill-judged observations, by unguarded speeches. Oftentimes it happens, that differences are caused between friends, and even between relatives, by the officious interference of a third person, who, under the cloak of friend-

ship, goes and relates to one what has been said or done by the other party ; but relates it in such a different manner, or with such a different tone of voice, as to make that, which was spoken or done without any unfriendly motive, appear highly disrespectful, or grossly impertinent. Oftentimes it happens, that scandals are propagated, uneasinesses caused, and the most deadly feuds created, by speaking with too great freedom, by throwing out distant hints, by uttering expressions of a mysterious tendency. Oftentimes it happens, that husband is prejudiced against wife, that lovers are led to dissolve their courtship, that servants are set against their masters, and masters against their servants, by the tongues of others. Oftentimes it happens, that children are induced to behave disrespectfully to their parents or superiors, and even flocks to be prejudiced against their pastors, and subjects against their rulers, by the intemperate, or invidious, or defamatory remarks, which proceed from the tongues of others. Oh ! who shall reckon up the evils which are caused by the tongue !

But there is one which claims particular notice. Look into the families where disunion and dissension prevail. Examine into the cause of it ; and on most occasions you will find, that the tongue is the restless member from which the evil proceeds. This disunion or dissension is generally caused by domestic

quarrels. These quarrels are the contentions of the tongue. Generally it originates from a fault on one side or the other: words ensue: the husband becomes warm; the wife equally warm. The dispute encreases. The husband criminales the wife: the wife criminales the husband. They gain no advantage on either side. When one is accused, and cannot exculpate himself, he retorts upon the other, by accusing her of some former failing. Words follow words; and although, perhaps, nothing but the truth may be said on either side, old sores are opened, old grievances renewed, the most serious domestic evils introduced, and in a short time gain such deep root as seldom to be eradicated.—These are serious evils indeed; and to no other cause are they to be attributed, but to the malevolence of the tongue. Were these people seriously to reflect on the error of their ways: were they to calculate the calamities which they bring upon themselves; were they to profit by experience, and, judging from the past, decide upon adopting a different line of conduct, what reasons would they have to rejoice! When either of them commits a fault, I acknowledge it is just he should be reprehended by the other. But when the other has experienced that this reprehension causes anger in the offending party, and the intended remedy has no other effect than encreasing the evil, does not reason say that a different line of conduct ought to be pursued?

To meet anger with anger, and to encounter passion with passion, is like adding fuel to the fire : it causes a greater conflagration than ever. Truly, my brethren, both reason and experience teach us, that anger is quelled by meekness, and that the most violent paroxysms of rage are subdued by mildness. A silence, which arises not from sullenness and stifled anger, but from the spirit of meekness and christian piety, will, on almost all occasions, quell the tumults of the most impassioned mind, and produce a calm.

But the injured party, perhaps, may say, that it is impossible for human nature to stand against such aggravating language, and to say nothing in their own defence. That it is very difficult no one will deny. A modest defence, however, is not what we are discommending, nor is it at any time the cause of what we are reprobating. It is repelling passion by passion—accusation by accusation—that we condemn, as being contrary to the maxims of the gospel, and of common sense. However great may be the difficulty, this must be done ; and by the assistance of the grace of God, this may be done. The tongue must be kept within due bounds : and when you consider that this bridling the tongue is attended with the most beneficial effects, and that the giving full liberty to the tongue is attended with the most pernicious consequences, what an encouragement is held out to you, to apply to the

Father of Mercies for his protecting grace in the hour of trial.

Be, therefore, my brethren, on all occasions, guided by the dictates of reason and religion. I have described a few of the evils resulting from the unbounded liberty of the tongue. It is *a restless member, a world of iniquity, a deadly poison*. It is a *small member*, but, like the small *helm of a ship*, it *directeth the whole vessel*. Your tongue was given you, for the purpose of enabling you to provide for your temporal wants, and to bless and praise God. Employ it for those purposes only : and when the devil or your passions strive to enlist it into their service, repel their attacks, and consecrate it anew to the service for which it was given you. Let it not be said that *your religion is vain*, merely because you will not bridle your tongue. Be watchful at all times, and *offend not in words, that you may be perfect men*.—By this conduct, you will be procuring for yourselves much happiness in this life, and you will be preparing yourselves for happiness in the next.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

ON MUTUAL CHARITY.

Before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covereth the multitude of sins.

1 PET. iv. 8.

THE sentence of the Apostle, which I have selected for my text on this day, is worthy of your serious consideration. It is a sentence, which applies to common life, and enforces a duty, which, although little attended to by the world at large, is of the utmost importance: BEFORE ALL THINGS, *have a constant mutual charity among yourselves.* It enjoins, that you should not only have charity for mankind in general, but that you should have a constant mutual charity among yourselves:—that you should be all united together as brethren:—that each individual should love and cherish all, as far as circumstances allow, and that all should love and cherish him:—that censoriousness, and ill will, and every thing that is not agreeable to the tender feelings of

charity, should be banished from your breasts, and that charity should induce you, not only to love your friends, but to veil or cover over the multitude of sins or defects, which you may discover in your enemies.

This is the substance of the instructions, which are contained in the words of my text. That they are of essential importance, you will readily allow ; and consequently, it will not be necessary for me to solicit your most serious attention to the remarks which the subject shall suggest to my mind.

The doctrine of fraternal love is one of the most positive doctrines of the gospel. It is inculcated in almost every page of the inspired writings. It is one of the two great commandments, which comprise the whole law. It is a commandment, which enjoins the practice of all those good works, which do honour to the native dignity of man, which give consolation and relief to the afflicted, and which are declared to be in great measure the price of our salvation. The beloved disciple, St. John, made it the constant theme of his discourses ; and, according to the testimony of his historians, it is said that, his disciples being wearied with the constant repetition, he declared, " it is the precept of the Lord, and if you comply with it, you do enough."—It is a virtue, which we fondly call the favourite attribute of the Deity—the attribute of universal love for his creatures ;—an attribute, on which we rely

for every thing that is good, for every thing that is desirable. In a word, charity is a virtue, which ought to be of as universal extent in our breasts, as it is in the Divinity ; that is, it ought to be extended to all, in the same manner as his love is extended to all. There ought to be no exception. Neither injuries, nor affronts, nor ill-will, nor any defects of body or mind, nor any civil or religious distinction, are sufficient causes for exception. We are all united together in a holy band, and we be to the man who dares to exclude any one, let him be who he will, from a participation in his affections and charity.

Situated as we are, here below in this land of exile, and looking up to that blessed country, where our inheritance is waiting for us, we have every inducement to mutual charity. Our fellow-creatures are our brethren : we may almost say, that they are a part of ourselves ; *for we are all members one of another.* (Eph. iv.) We are all the work of the same Almighty hand. We have all the same nature. We have all the same Father. We have all the same Redeemer, and the same Sanctifier. We are all entitled to claim the same country for our inheritance. Consequently, being all children of the same Parent, we are brothers and sisters ; and more intimately so than they are, who are brothers and sisters only according to the flesh, or who have received their birth from the same mortal parents. We are all beloved

by our Father, who is in heaven, as his children. We are all clasped together in his bosom. We are all nourished, clothed, and upheld by him. We are all sprinkled with the blood, which his only begotten Son, has shed for our salvation. We are all favoured with his graces, and are all entitled to the merits of the passion and death of our Redeemer.—We are all in the same banishment, and exile from our true country: all in the same crucible of tribulation and suffering;—all in the same chains; all in the same glorious expectation of deliverance; all in the same state of total dependance on one great and common Lord of all things. Notwithstanding that some may be in poverty, and others in affluence;—some in derision and contempt, others decorated with honours and titles;—some condemned to drudgery and labour, others enabled to roll about at their ease in their chariots;—some vilified by disagreeable tempers, morose habits, and forbidding approach, others dignified by pleasing ways, meek dispositions, and conciliating manners:—notwithstanding, I say, that some are of such an unhappy turn of mind or disposition, as to try to please nobody, and, consequently, to gain no friends; and others, on the contrary, are so placid, so pleasing, so candid, so upright, as to win the affections of all; and to draw to them all, who are within the circle of their acquaintance, by the ties of sincere affection and esteem; nevertheless, we are

all indiscriminately united together by the bands above enumerated—bands, which ought to be of greater strength, and more difficult to be dissolved, than any which are formed merely by the relationship of kindred.—Again, notwithstanding that many, or perhaps, the greater number of our brethren and fellow-creatures, do not live up to the precepts of the gospel, nor seek to unite themselves together in the bands of constant mutual charity:—notwithstanding that the greater number walk on in the broad road, that leadeth to perdition, even to the last moment of their mortal existence, yet, we are not allowed to exclude any one from the bosom of our charity. And the reason is, because we are not the searchers of hearts, and consequently have not authority to judge any one. In fact, who is there amongst us, that can foresee which of this immense multitude will be damned, and which will be saved? Was it, that the broad seal of damnation was stamped on the forehead of any individual, during his abode on earth, and that it was made known to us, that that seal would never be removed, then, I acknowledge, it would be allowable for us to exclude that unfortunate person from our affections: it would even be allowable to hate him with that same holy hatred, as the condemned in hell are hated by the blessed spirits in heaven, or, as we are exhorted, to hate the devil himself. But, since this seal is not stamped on the forehead of any one, during the time of

his mortal life, and, since the road to repentance and pardon is open to every sinner, as long as life remains, it is not allowable for us to exclude any one from our charity; it is not allowable for us to entertain sentiments of hatred, or ill-will, or animosity, or dislike, towards any one, let the person be who he will.

It is frequently said by those, who seem to be in love with piety, but who are not sufficiently conversant with the duties of the gospel, that it is not required to be in charity with those, who are not in charity with God: "such a person," they say, "is a wicked, abominable wretch, worthy only of contempt and scorn; and how can a man, who feels a sincere regard for the honour of God, and who strives to love him, as a Christian ought to love him, endure such a monster of iniquity, such an enemy of God, and all that is good?" Such a plea as this, will not justify a breach of charity. To hate sin, is the duty of every Christian: but to hate the sinner, is not allowable to any one. It is our duty to compassionate, and to pray for the unfortunate individual, who has suffered himself to be enthralled by the common enemy of mankind. Our prayers may be of service to him. Our prayers may contribute to effect his deliverance from the labyrinth of his errors, and bring him to repentance. Our prayers may be the means of his being changed from a child of perdition, into a child of grace and love. These may be the effects of our prayers.

And does not the very idea of the duty of a Christian point out to us, that we ought to pray for the sinner, and not to despise and hate him, or wish that the judgments of God may speedily fall upon him?—It is very probable that, on most occasions, there may be little hope of our prayers having the desired effect. That is not our business. We are to follow our duty, and leave the effect of our prayers to God. Whether the sinner be retained, or not, our charity will not fail of receiving its reward from God.—Remember, therefore, that, to hate sin, and compassionate and pray for the sinner, is a duty, from which no authority, either in heaven or on earth, will ever free you.

It will be fitting, however, to remark, that it is very seldom that a sinner is despised and hated merely on account of his sins. We should certainly avoid the company of a man, who was a murderer, or a thief, and of a woman that made no account of her virtue; and we should act prudently and conscientiously by so doing. But how few are there of either of these descriptions, with whom any of us have any cause for acquaintance? Our hatred, animosity, or want of charity, are towards people whose sins are of a different nature, and our hatred, and the rest, generally arise from other sources, than that of apprehension for the safety of either our persons, property, or honour. They arise from causes totally unconnected with zeal for

the honour of God, or the salvation of our own souls. We can all reckon, in the number of our acquaintance, many who are open and undisguised transgressors of some of the laws of God; and yet, if their society is pleasing, or if we expect any temporal advantage from their friendship, we pay as much respect and deference to them, as we do to those, whose characters are spotless and undefiled in the eyes of men. May it not, therefore, be said, that on these occasions we love the sinner, although it may be, that we hate the sins to which he is habitually subject? Ah! my brethren, too true it is, that when we break the precept of mutual charity, it is not on account of our hatred of sin. Such a one has injured us. Such a one is a determined enemy to us. Such a one is resolved to do us all the harm in his power. Such a one has disgraced himself, and his disgrace falls upon us. Such a one is displeasing in his manners and behaviour. Such a one is proud and overbearing. Such a one is hot, passionate, and unfeeling. These are the causes of our dislikes. Sometimes it happens that our want of charity arises, not from any fault of theirs, but from our own perverse dispositions. Some we dislike because they prosper in the world, or are more honoured and esteemed than we are. This, properly speaking, is envy, one of the seven deadly sins. Towards others we feel an aversion, because some one or other of their friends, has

done us an injury. And sometimes the influence of self-love is so strong, that we feel little or no regard for any one, except it be those with whom we are united in friendship, or from whom we have received, or expect to receive favours.

These, in general, are the causes of our want of mutual charity. Let the Christian examine them, and let him candidly say, whether any one of them will plead his justification in the sight of God. No : my brethren, be not deceived to your own destruction. If you suffer the bonds of mutual charity to be broken, let the cause be what it will, you will have to give a severe account of it hereafter. Although you may gloss it over in your own mind, during the time of health and strength, the veil will be withdrawn, when you are on the point of appearing before your Judge. The awful forebodings of a guilty conscience will fill you with dismay. You will seem already to hear these interrogatories : “ Did you forgive all your enemies, as you hope to be forgiven by me ? Had you no spite, or spleen, or ill-will towards any one ? Had you a constant mutual charity with all your fellow-creatures ? ” You will endeavour to calm your feelings, by pronouncing a sentence of general pardon to all who have been the objects of your hatred. But this will not satisfy you. You will recollect, that it was your duty to keep up a *constant* mutual charity. You will seem to hear the Almighty ad-

dressing you in these words : " What right had you, *at any time*, to exclude individuals from your affections ? They were my creatures, and your brethren. I loved them all : why did not you do the same ? I shed my blood for them : why did not you sacrifice your ill tempers, your malevolent disposition, for their sake ? You knew not, but I had designs of particular mercies on them, and that I should raise them to a state of eminent piety, and exalt them to a place in heaven, much higher than any that you ever dared to look up to : and, ignorant as you were of my designs, how could you presume to treat these very people with scorn and contempt ? I cannot pray to my Father for you, as I formerly did for my executioners : *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* You knew your duty. You knew that my command was general and positive. You knew that you were to love your friends in God, and your enemies for God. You knew from my inspired word, that I required, *above all things*, that you should *have a constant mutual charity among yourselves.* You knew all this : consequently, you sinned with knowledge ; and, according to the irrevocable word, which I have pronounced, *with the same measure that you have measured to others, it shall be measured to you again*, (Matt. vii.) : *judgment without mercy to you who have not shown mercy*, (James ii.)

What must be the feelings of the wretched soul, at the last hour of life, when reflections

like these, press upon her imagination ! That you may not experience the same, enter now seriously into yourselves. Scrutinize the inmost recesses of your hearts, and examine your affections. If you discover that there is only one individual, with whom you are not in charity, make not light of it. It is a serious transgression. It must be repented of, and reparation must be made. All men, universally and individually, must be included within the limits of your charity.

It is not, indeed, required that you love all with an equal degree of love. Love may vary according to its motives. There is a worldly love, and a spiritual love. The love, which we feel for parents, relations, benefactors, and friends, may be called a worldly love, because it arises from worldly motives. The love, which we feel for our enemies, or for mankind at large, may properly be called spiritual, or a love arising from spiritual motives ; namely, a love for the creatures of God for God's sake, without any regard to worldly motives, or to the dictates of self-love. In proportion as we advance in virtue, this spiritual love will increase in our souls. But as long as we remain in these our earthly tabernacles, the love of relations and friends must be expected to make the greatest impression on our feelings. Those we shall always love the most, who are the dearest to us, whether the cause arise from relationship, attachment, or benefits received, whether

corporal or spiritual. But yet, the precept of constant mutual charity may be fulfilled, without any particular attachment or familiarity, without any tokens of friendly intercourse with the party concerned, or without any knowledge of the persons whom we are to love ; for who can be acquainted with the whole of the human race ?

Again, it is not required that we give our confidence to all alike. The man who has betrayed the trust reposed in him, may, without violating the rules of Christian charity, be removed from our counsels. The man, who has endeavoured to draw us into sin, may be rejected from our society : so likewise may the man who is quarrelsome, libidinous, a detractor or slanderer, or addicted to any other vice, which renders him an obnoxious member of society ; and yet the rules of Christian charity may not be violated. St. Paul says, that we ought not so much as to eat with a person who is an obstinate rebel to the Church. (1 Cor. v.)

Again, it is not forbidden by Christian charity, to express sentiments of anger and indignation when a friend transgresses against the rules of duty, particularly when his or her transgression is against the sixth commandment ; nor even to refuse a reconciliation with such a friend for a time ; provided that our only motive be to show forth our hatred for the crime, and to contribute to the repentance and reformation of

the delinquent. These motives will justify anger, provided they are unmixed with any personal or selfish motive. Then we may be angry, and sin not, as the apostle expresses it, (*Eph. iv.*): because we shall then be impelled only by zeal for the honour and glory of God, and by earnest desires for the salvation of our offending brethren. But we must take care not to justify hatred and animosity for injuries received, under the idea that we are showing forth our detestation of sin.

Let us, therefore, reflect, my brethren, that unless we have hopes of reclaiming the sinner, either by our authority, or by our example, it is our duty to pay him certain kinds of attention, and to compassionate and pray for him; leaving judgment to God. *Charity covereth a multitude of sins*, (1 Pet. iv.) Were we immaculate in all things: were we without sin, we might be allowed to throw a stone at our sinful brother. But *we are all sinners, and we all need the glory of God*, (Rom. iii.) and consequently, we ought to compassionate and to pray for those who are in the same unhappy state as ourselves.

Let us, then, endeavour to forget the failings of others, remembering our own. And, with respect to the offences which others may commit against us, let us reflect that true and perfect forgiveness is exacted from us by the justice of God; and that nothing will justify animosity and spleen.—*Before all things, have*

a constant mutual charity among yourselves, This is the command; and nothing on earth can authorise you to violate it. Whatever injuries, therefore, you may receive from your former friends, acquaintance, or relations, leave the consequences to God. He has said: *Revenge is mine, I will repay.* (Heb. x.) Banish all animosity from your breasts. Suffer no ill-will to remain on your minds. Death-bed reconciliations are as little to be depended upon, as death-bed repentance. Enter into sentiments of love and charity for the whole world. Let it be manifest to all men, your love and affection for one another. *Keep up a constant mutual charity among yourselves,* for the love of God, and for the love of Jesus, who has shed his blood for them, as well as for you. Endeavour to be united together in this world, in the same manner, and with the same mutual love, as you hope to be united together hereafter in the bosom of him, who is all charity. Thus shall mankind know that we love God, if we love one another; and thus shall we be securing to ourselves, all that is valuable to ourselves in a never ending eternity.

ASCENSION DAY.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

*Ye men of Galilee, why stand you here looking up to heaven?
This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so
come as you have seen him going into heaven.* ACTS i, 11.

OF all the scenes which have been witnessed by the eyes of mortal men, none is more awfully interesting than the account of the ascension of our Lord into heaven, as recorded in the epistle and gospel read on this festival. Appearing to his apostles in the shape of mortal man, and with the same features, by which they had hitherto recognized him, he led them to mount Olivet. There he gave them his last instructions. Having completed all things, for the instruction and salvation of men, he was raised up from the earth, and gradually ascending into the air, penetrated the clouds, and was taken out of their sight. How truly awful and majestic must have been this spectacle! The eyes of the disciples were intently fixed upon him. They seemed, as it

were, to forget themselves, in the anxious expectations of seeing him once more. They were roused from their revery by two angels, who addressed them in the words of my text, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand you here looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen him going into heaven.*

What must have been the feelings of the apostles on this occasion! In fact, what had they not endured during the last fifty days? From the time that their master was delivered into the hands of his enemies, their minds had been the prey of anxiety and solicitude. During the time of his passion, who shall describe their sorrows? His resurrection cheered their drooping spirits, and reanimated their faith. But, notwithstanding the great joy which they felt, in seeing him living, who had been so lately reckoned among the dead, their anxiety and solicitude were not entirely removed. Their love for their divine Master, caused them to wish always for his corporal presence, and this they were not permitted to enjoy. The manifestations of himself to them were seldom, and but for a short time. His former discourses, likewise, added to their grief, wherein he declared, that the time was approaching, when he should leave them, and return to the Father. Weak and timid, as they then were, the idea of being entirely deprived of his visible presence, presented the most terrible prospects

before their eyes. They were like sheep, dreading the approach of wolves. They had no confidence in their own strength, and no probable means of self-defence. The Jews had already raged against their master, and had put him to a cruel death, and they had no reason to expect any other, than that they would rage against them, with at least equal fury. Above all, the cheering prospect, which they had had in view, that their Master would re-establish the kingdom of Israel, and make them the rulers and judges of his people, was entirely vanished : and nothing was to be looked for, but that they would be treated as the partisans of one, who had been condemned as a seducer of the people, as an idle pretender to royalty, and as a rebel against the authority of Cæsar.

What, then, must have been their feelings, when they saw their only protector, and their only hope, rising gradually from the ground, ascending up to the clouds, and at length disappearing from their sight ! What sentiments of love, what ardent desires of following him, must have been intermingled with the grief and sorrow, which overwhelmed their souls ! They stood motionless and silent, with their eyes fixed on the cloud which had taken him from their sight. At length, two angels, in the shape of young men, appeared to them, gently upbraided them for their eager looks after their beloved Master, and, for their only consolation,

assured them that, at the last day, and not till then, he would come down from heaven in the same manner as they had seen him go up to heaven. Oh! here was need indeed of the most heroic fortitude, and of an unlimited submission to the will of the Almighty. The state of the apostles on this occasion, suggests many reflections, which, if duly weighed, would afford consolation to us in the midst of the tribulations and vicissitudes of this mortal life.

The apostles were looking forward to a temporal kingdom, and to the possession of earthly dignities, and grandeur. Their intentions, we may say, were pure; for, although they expected a temporal kingdom, they expected it would be the kingdom of God, over which the Messiah would reign *with wisdom, and goodness, and justice*. But yet, their ideas were earthly. This world engaged more of their thoughts than the next. *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel*, was the last petition that they made to him. Their Lord and Master had previously informed them, that his kingdom was not of this world; and to the sons of Zebedee, James and John, whose mother had petitioned that they might sit, the one on his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom, he had replied, that they were to drink of the chalice of his sufferings, but that the seats which they were to occupy in his kingdom, were at the disposal of his Father alone. But the meaning of all this they did

not understand. Their minds were not enlightened. They walked in the dark: and our Saviour permitted them to experience the feelings of the most oppressive fear, grief, sorrow, hope, and disappointment, rather than open their minds prematurely to understand the ways of his providence, and to behold the specific objects which they were chosen to fulfil.

In the same manner does the Almighty deal with us. Although he has our good only in view, in all the dispensations of his providence, he does not always allow us to see by what means the causes are to produce these effects. He draws the veil of obscurity over the future, and allows us not to see beyond the present time. Sometimes, like the apostles, we are looking forward with anxious hope, to the possession of some temporal good. Success does not attend our endeavours, nor crown our hopes. The brilliant prospect disappears: and, instead of obtaining what we expected to possess, perhaps we lose part of that, which we had already in our hands. On occasions like these, not considering, as we ought to do, that the Almighty has ordained that it should be so for our good, and not seeing how these losses and disappointments are to turn ultimately to our profit, our hearts are sorrowful; we lament over our seeming misfortunes, and we are tempted to think, that providence does not attend to our necessities with the same care, as to the necessities of those, who seem

to prosper in all their ways. But, my brethren, listen not to suggestions of this description. The Almighty has his motives in view, and they are motives, which, when made known to us, will be entitled to our admiration and gratitude.—The apostles were disappointed in their hopes of a temporal kingdom; and, instead of honours and dignities, found themselves destitute like orphans, and exposed to all the malice of the determined and powerful enemies of their master. At that time, they knew not the reason why, nor did they see before them any prospect of relief. In the space, however, of a few days, their minds were enlightened. The Paraclete descended upon them, and clearly manifested to them, that the Almighty in all his ways had followed the dictates of clemency and love. Their affections to earthly things were instantly removed, and they became spiritual men—men, sighing only after the honour and glory of God, and the salvation of souls.—It will be the same with us. God, in his good time, will, if we are faithful to him, open our understandings to comprehend that the temporal evils, which he suffers to befall us, are intended to promote our spiritual welfare, to take off our affections from this world, and to enable us to labour, with greater energy, and with less distraction, for the sanctification of our souls. Let us, therefore, on all occasions of temporal calamity and distress, place our entire confi-

dence in the dispensations of Providence, who, although he exposes us to present sufferings, has no other object in view than providing us with means of obtaining, more effectually, the possession of that eternal weight of glory, which he has purchased for us.

The apostles, in the second place, were fondly attached to the corporal presence of their Divine Master. In him, they found a Father, a friend, a counsellor, a protector. His society was their only consolation; and on his presence amongst them seemed to depend the establishment of that kingdom, which they looked for. Without him they conceived that they could do nothing: and the very thought of his leaving them, filled them with dismay: *because I have spoken these things to you*, said our Saviour, *sorrow hath filled your hearts*. (John xvi. 6.) But, my brethren, ardent as was their love for Jesus, and confident and well-founded as were their hopes in his visible protection, nevertheless, it was expedient for them that he should go: for, if he had not gone, the Paraclete would not have come to them. This, our Lord positively declared to them before his passion. But they knew not what it meant. It did not alleviate their sorrows: it did not allay their fears.—So blind are men, even the best intentioned, and the most pious, as to the future. After the accomplishment of the great mystery, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles clearly saw that it was expedient for them that

he should go, and that, on his departure from them the greatest events depended, even the establishment of Christ's spiritual kingdom on earth, and the conversion of the whole world. But, at that time, these things were hidden from their eyes.

As it was with the apostles, so it is with us. We are happy in the society of friends, who are near and dear to us. The idea of being for ever separated from them in this world, is painful : and when the moment of separation is come, our affliction is great, in proportion to the degree of affection, which we feel for them. A parent is inconsolable for the loss of a darling child :—a child for its parent,—a brother for a brother,—a sister for a sister,—a friend for a friend.—But, alas ! how blind is poor human nature to what is for its real good ! Were we allowed to enter into the secrets of Providence, we should probably discover, that it was expedient for us that such separations should take place.—It often happens, that the affections are too strongly fixed on a parent, a child, a wife, a brother, a friend, or a benefactor ; and that the love, which we ought to have for God, is diminished thereby. It often happens, that we look to these, our beloved friends, for comfort, and happiness, and protection, more than we ought to do, and that our sense of dependence on God is considerably diminished. In cases like these, it is undoubtedly expedient for us that a separation should take

place; and the Almighty ordains, that ~~it~~ should take place surely for our good.

Again: it often happens, that the dear friend, who is taken from us, was ripe for heaven: or at least, it often happens, that the Almighty foresees that a longer life would, instead of contributing to the greater sanctification of his soul, cause him to suffer loss, and be detrimental to him for all eternity. And when this is the case, would it be just, would it be reasonable to repine, and murmur, and complain, as it were, against the ordinance of God? It is true, we lose the visible presence of one whom we love: but, if the loss of his society ~~is~~ to turn to our profit, or to his gain, are we not acting contrary to the dictates of reason, if we grieve, when we ought to rejoice? We cannot, indeed, clearly see the motives which the Almighty has in view, when he takes from us a dear friend, whose presence seems to be of essential importance to us. But we know this, that the all-powerful will of God is likewise all-merciful, and that, in all his ordinances, he consults our spiritual good in one shape or another.

Let us not, therefore, continue with our eyes fixed on the graves of our departed friends, as if a great evil had befallen us. Let us rather look up to Jesus, the Author of our faith, and the Finisher of our hope. We have our souls to save. To attend to this most important business, is of more consequence to us, than all things beside. The things of this world, cannot

be possessed by us for any long time, nor will the separation of friends be for many years : but the things, which appertain to our souls, are to be for all eternity. Let us not, therefore, stand idly looking up to heaven. Let us rather set about the great work without delay. We have a great deal to do. We have many vices to conquer, and many virtues to acquire. Let not our attention, therefore, be taken from this important task, by objects of less consideration.—Our Saviour is ascended into heaven. Let us fix our affections solely on him. He is more to us than all the world besides. He is gone to prepare places for us in the bosom of his Father. He is gone to get ready, by the time we are summoned out of this world, the crowns of immortal glory which he has purchased for us. Let us endeavour to make ourselves deserving of them, and worthy of him, by a life of perfect holiness and piety. He will then be prepared, at our departure hence, to welcome us into his embraces, to present us to his Father, as the fruits of his passion and death, and to associate us to the fellowship of all his Angels and Saints in the mansions of his glory.

WHIT-SUNDAY.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. ACTS ii. 4.

IN the Epistle of this day, my brethren, we read the interesting account of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, and of the final establishment of the New Law. Previous to this day, the obligation of observing the whole of the law of Moses continued in force. Our Lord observed it, and the Apostles observed it. But now the Synagogue is done away, and the Old Law gives place to the New Law, the law of love, which is to continue to the end of the world.

Before this time, indeed, the day of Pentecost was observed by the Jews as a day of great solemnity, as one of the principal festivals of the year. It was observed on two accounts; first, because the first fruits of their wheat were

offered in the temple on this day, it being their time of harvest : secondly, because this was the day on which the law was given to Moses on Mount Sina. On these two accounts, this day, and the whole of the week, was devoted by them to the exercises of religion, and to public acts of thanksgiving.—But if the Jews observed this time with such solemnity, what more powerful reasons have we to be grateful for the blessings which we commemorate on this day, and to pour forth our souls in acts of thanksgiving and love ! Greater blessings were bestowed on us, on this day, than on them : and consequently, more perfect offerings were expected from us, than from them. Let us, therefore, attend to the important calls of duty, and celebrate this festival with the greatest fervour and devotion.

Before the coming of Christ, one only nation was acquainted with the nature of the true God : one only nation was reckoned in the number of the children of God : one only nation was governed by the laws of God, and entitled to the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, through faith in a Saviour to come. All other nations were buried in the shades of spiritual darkness : all other nations were idolaters, adoring stocks and stones, the work of men's hands : all other nations were cast off, as it were, by God, and delivered up to the depravities of corrupt nature, and to all the evils attendant on ignorance and impiety, both in

this life, and in the next. Our ancestors were included in the unhappy number.

But on this day, the mercies of God began to be poured out on all the nations of the universe. The Holy Spirit, who was to renew the face of the earth, descended on the Apostles in a visible form, and infused into their souls those gifts and graces, and endowed them with those extraordinary powers, which were to enable them to carry the truths of his holy word to the uttermost boundaries of the earth. He descended in the form of fiery tongues—a form expressive of the wonderful effects which his presence was to effect. He descended in the form of tongues, resting on the head of each of the Apostles, to denote that they were to preach the gospel, not to one nation only, as had heretofore been decreed, but to people of all nations and tongues; in unison with the words of the Son of God himself: *Go, teach all nations*. These tongues were of fire, to denote, that the gospel was not only to be preached, but to be preached with fervour and zeal: and that it was not only to be received and admitted as the truth by the people, but that its precepts were to be followed with ardour, and its spirit animate the breasts of its followers with the flames of holy love.

On this day, therefore, the Apostles—the *ambassadors extraordinary* of the Most High, received their credentials, authorising them to come and announce to all nations, sitting till

then in the horrors of darkness, and in the shades of death, the glad tidings, that they were eligible to the title of the adopted children of God ; that the gates of heaven were to be thrown open to them, as well as to his former chosen people ; and that they were to be admitted to the privileges, and even to greater privileges, than his most favoured people had ever enjoyed — On this day the truths of salvation, the tidings of redemption, were commanded to be spread over the whole universe.—By virtue of this commission, on this day, the light of the Sun of Justice began to disperse the shades of darkness, which for so many ages had hung lowering over the whole gentile world. Its effects were first produced in the Apostles themselves, who, until this day, had retained the spirit of the world, and understood little of the spirit of God. It was then disseminated amongst the Jewish converts : afterwards amongst the Gentiles in the vicinity of Judea ; and lastly, it was spread over every nation, to the uttermost boundaries of the earth.

On this day, the law of slavery and fear, the law of bondage, which was imposed on the Jews, on account of the hardness of their hearts, was abolished, and the law of clemency and love, by which we are allowed, as the Apostle says, to address our God by the endearing title of *Abba*, *Father*, (Rom. viii.) was established, and promulgated as the privilege

of every nation under the sun.—In a word, on this day the decree of the Almighty, passed in his eternal mind from the beginning of ages, began to be put in execution, whereby all mankind were to be associated into the fellowship of Christ, were to be formed into one body under one head, and were to be made *a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people.* (1 Pet. ii.)

These, my brethren, are the blessings, which were prepared for us on this day. For the administering these great blessings to us, the Holy Spirit infused into the hearts of the Apostles graces corresponding with the important work entrusted to them. He came into the room, where they were sitting, as a mighty wind rushing, and sat over the head of each of them in the form of a cloven tongue of fire. Weak and timid as the Apostles had hitherto been, he immediately imbued them with strength and courage. Terrified as they had been at the prospect of danger, he inspired them with fortitude to despise the threats of the wicked, to rejoice when they were accounted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus, (*Acts v.*) and to be ready to preach the gospel at the risk of their lives, and in opposition to the united efforts of all the powers of earth and hell. Ignorant as they were, he instantly enlightened their minds, to comprehend the great mystery of their redemption; and he strengthened their memory, so as to enable them to remem-

ber all that had been said to them by their Lord and Saviour. (*John* xiv.)—In addition to these wonderful qualifications, he imparted to them the gift of tongues, by the means of which they were enabled to preach the gospel to people of every nation, in their own language: and he gave them power to cast out devils, and to work even greater wonders in the curing of corporal diseases, than he himself had wrought. (*John* xiv.) Interior graces, likewise, he imparted to them almost beyond measure, to enable them, not merely to preach, the only qualification which is witnessed in too many preachers in these times, but to show forth, in their own conduct, the practice of the precepts and counsels, which they were commissioned to preach to others.

Thus arrayed, thus protected and fortified, the apostles boldly began their march, on this day, against the powers of darkness. They preached, without fear, doctrines, which were entirely opposite to the doctrines of the world. They preached self-denial and penance to men, who were accustomed to indulge, without restraint, and without scruple, in all the sensuality of corrupt nature.—They preached humility to men, who were puffed up with pride, and who considered honour and glory as adding to the dignity of human nature.—They preached meekness and forgiveness of injuries to men, who gloried in revenge, and who considered meekness as becoming only

weak and pusillanimous minds.—They preached mourning and sadness to men, who sought after gaiety and pleasure, as the only good things which mortals could enjoy on this side the grave.—They preached up chastity and continency to men, who were accustomed to all the sensualities of lust, and who revered even impurities, in their horrid worship of several of their imaginary deities.—They preached a hatred of the world, and a renunciation of all visible things, for the sake of those that are invisible, to men, who looked to visible things only, as worthy of their notice.—They preached that all temporal things were to be despised, to men, who thought that temporal things only, were worthy of esteem.—They preached Jesus, and him crucified, to the Jews, to whom he was a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, to whom he was a scandal. (1 *Cor.* 1.)

—In a word, they preached the incomprehensible mysteries of one God in three Persons, of a God, become man, and dying on the cross, of the resurrection of the dead, of incomprehensible and eternal happiness in heaven, and of incomprehensible and eternal misery in hell, to men, to whom the name itself of mystery was a mystery, who refused to believe every thing that they could not understand, who were habituated to pride themselves on the extent of their abilities and learning; and who looked down, with a kind of contempt, on those narrow-minded, deluded

mortals, as they considered them, who bowed down *their understandings to the obedience of faith*, and who submitted to be guided by revelation in the belief of things, to which their judgment and understanding could not reach.

Although the doctrines, which the apostles were to preach, were thus in opposition to all the received opinions of men, and so painful to the feelings of flesh and blood, they nevertheless, boldly advanced. The hand of God was with them, *working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed*. (Mark xvi.) They made speedy progress. The number of believers rapidly increased: and, in a few years, the multitudes of the faithful were almost beyond calculation, branching out into every nation of the then known world.—The powers of darkness raged against them: but to no purpose. The incomprehensible mysteries of the gospel, the painful duties of mortification and penance, although preached by men, whom the world called poor, illiterate, and fanatical, and who were supported by no other arms than the sword of the Spirit, were admitted, believed, and practised. At length, these illustrious men,—men, whose equals the world had never beheld, in further testimony of the truth, sealed their doctrines with their blood.—Their successors in the ministry, animated with the same zeal, and strengthened by the same Holy Spirit, continued the great work, and with the same success. In process of time

these holy truths, these truths of salvation, descended to us, who live in these latter times ; and by means of the ministry, which has continued down, in an uninterrupted succession from the apostles, they are manifested to us in the clearest light, and in the minutest detail.

Thus, my brethren, was this day the beginning of all our spiritual good : and with what sentiments of gratitude and love, ought we to celebrate it? A cold, tepid devotion, does not become us on this occasion. Not to feel the warmth of piety and gratitude, would argue a deficiency in the essential requisites of the character of true Christians.

Fly, then, to the throne of this God of all mercies; and, with hearts on fire with divine love, pour forth your souls in acts of most fervent devotion.—Present, likewise, your annual offerings : and let these offerings be as much superior to those which the Jews presented on this day, as the blessings which you commemorate, are superior to theirs. They presented sheaves of wheat, as testimony of their gratitude for the fruits of the earth imparted to them. You have received spiritual blessings : let your offerings be spiritual.

In the first place, offer to your God a *contrite and humble heart*. Notwithstanding that the mercies of heaven, temporal as well as spiritual, have flowed in upon you with great abundance during the course of the year, you have offended in many things. Perhaps, not a

day has passed over but you have transgressed in one point or another. Offer up, therefore, the tears of sincere repentance, and the protestations of eternal fidelity for the time to come.—As pride, likewise, has exercised too great influence over your minds, enter into more profound sentiments of humility; acknowledge that you are nothing, and that God is all things; and be resolved henceforward, on all occasions to give glory to him, to whom alone glory is due.

In the second place, offer him your heart, with all its affections. *Son, give me thy heart,* says the Spirit of God. (Prov. xxiii.) If God has done so much for you, and has done it out of pure love, what can be more reasonable and just, than that you should make him that return, which will be most acceptable to him? Now, what return can we make, which can be in any manner acceptable to him, if our heart form not the principal part of our offering? In fact, we have nothing of our own to offer him, except our heart, by which I understand our own self-will, and our affections. For, what is there that we possess, that we have not received from God? And what is there that can separate us from God, except the following our own will, in opposition to his, (a power which he has given to us for the wisest purposes,) and placing our affections on persons or things which lead us to the transgression of his laws? Truly, my brethren, our only offering is our

heart. Offer him, therefore, on this day, your heart, your affections, your will. "*My love,*" says St. Augustin, "is my weight, thither I am carried, wheresoever I am carried." Who is so amiable as the God of all love? Whose will is so calculated to lead you into all good, as his, who is omnipotent, and who wills only your happiness? Who is so great a friend to you, as he who is your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, your Father, your God, and your all? Who can bestow such blessings on you, as he, who has given you every thing that you possess in this world, and in whose hands is the crown of glory, which you hope to possess hereafter? Who can be so worthy of your love, as he, who is the eternal, the incomprehensible God of heaven and earth: who has loved you first; and who has loved you for no other purpose, than that he might bring you to the possession of his eternal kingdom hereafter?—How then is it possible, that you should refuse your heart to him, who alone is worthy of it? How is it possible that you should follow your own will, in opposition to his, when you know that obedience to his will, is to procure for you every good? How can you fix your affections on perishable things, when you know that he alone is amiable above the children of men, and that he will not accept of a divided heart?—Let not your love, therefore, be centered in any thing that this world can present before you. Such things are mean,

and contemptible, when compared with the God, who claims your heart. The greater part of mankind, we acknowledge, pay little attention to these things. Their principal ambition seems to be, to enjoy themselves here. And the reason is, because they are not guided by the sentiments of religion. They are sensual men. They love visible things alone: because they are perceptible to the senses. But be not you like unto them. Faith has been imparted to you. Follow the example of the just man, and live by faith. (*Heb. x.*) Let your faith make the invisible things of eternity appear in stronger colours to your sight, than the visible things of this world. Then you will know where to fix your affections. Then you will be convinced, that neither titles, nor honours, nor riches, nor sensualities, nor pomp, nor splendor, nor beauty, are worthy of your heart. Then you will know, that God alone is the great All, and that without him, all other things are nothing. Then you will know, and will experience, that the love of God is the greatest enjoyment in this world, and that it alone will lead you to happiness hereafter.

These are the offerings, which you are called upon to present before the throne of the Almighty, on this day. They are offerings, indeed, not of human growth: but, now that they have been purchased for you, by the blood of your Redeemer, the means of acquiring them are within your reach. If, therefore, you

do not possess that contrite and humble heart, if you do not feel within yourselves, that warmth of gratitude and love, which I have been describing, apply for them immediately, to the source from which they are to come. Invoke the Holy Spirit to infuse them into your souls, as he infused them into the souls of the apostles on this day. You are not more weak and timid than they were, before the Holy Ghost descended upon them. You are not more attached to the kingdom of Israel, that is, to earthly honours, and dignities, and splendors, than they were. Invoke, therefore, this Holy Spirit, and fervently entreat him to come and renovate your hearts, and give you grace and strength to despise this world, to renounce the love of visible things, and to fix your conversation in heaven, in the same manner as he produced these effects in the apostles on this day. Oh! my brethren, what greater blessing could you pray for, than that you may be prepared for the coming of the Holy Ghost, and that these wonders may be produced in your souls. Then it would be your greatest delight, to present him the offering of a contrite and grateful heart. Then, like the apostles, you would walk in all the commandments of God without reproof; and you would be effectually preparing yourselves to be united with him, in the society of all the angels and saints, for endless ages, in the abodes of the eternal Sion.

WHIT-MONDAY.

ON THE EFFECTS PRODUCED IN THE SOUL BY
THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that, whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have everlasting life..... JOHN iii. 16.

ON the great festival, my brethren, which we yesterday commemorated, and which we are yet commemorating, your attention was called to a subject of great and serious importance. At this time it was that the Paraclete, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, was sent from the Father, by the promise of the Son, our Lord and Saviour, to those, by whose ministry, the face of the earth was to be regenerated.—At this time it was, that the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, in the form of fiery tongues, and infused grace and strength into their souls, to preach the gospel, and to set at nought all the powers of earth and hell.—At this time it was, that he planted his church, and gave powers which were to be transmitted to future

generations, of preaching and teaching, and administering his holy sacraments, to all peoples, and tribes, and nations, and tongues, until the consummation of ages. In a word, it was on this day that he bequeathed to us, in a particular manner, his *peace*, even that peace which the world cannot give : *not as the world giveth, do I give to you.* (John xiv. 27.)

The solemn commemoration of so many blessings, on the part of infinite goodness and love, ought to excite in your breasts, the tenderest sentiments of gratitude and love. Had it not been for these, you would now have been sitting in the horrors of darkness, and in the shades of death. Had it not been for these, the merits of your Saviour's passion would never have been imparted to you. Like your remote ancestors, you would have prostituted your adoration to imaginary deities, and with them you would have been deprived of your glorious privileges, and probably consigned to the regions of never ending woe.—Let this time, then, be a time of solemn thanksgiving. Pour forth your souls in acts of love for a God, the testimonies of whose love for you have been so far beyond your deserts. Sound forth the hymns of praise and adoration, and join in the canticles, which are sung by all those who have been redeemed by the Lamb, and who are now seated at his right hand in glory : *benediction, and glory, and thanksgiving, honour, and*

power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. (Apoc. vii.)

This, my brethren, ought to be the object of your devotion at this holy time. The Holy Spirit has descended upon you, as well as upon the apostles, and to his vivifying influence you are indebted for all the virtues that you possess, and for all the merit that you have acquired. All has been done for you, which infinite love, united with infinite justice, could do. And, if you have corresponded properly, on your parts, with the efforts, if I may so call them, of the Almighty, we may reasonably hope, that your acts of praise and thanksgiving at this time, will be only a prelude of those, which you will offer up to him for all eternity, when the bands of your mortality shall be dissolved.

On this subject, however, many important reflections occur to my mind, and to these alone will I call your attention, on this occasion. Every individual amongst you, was bound to correspond with these mercies of heaven ; for the salvation of your souls depends upon it. You all hope that you have, or wish that you had done it. But who are they amongst you that have, or have not done it? This is the question : but it is a question that is not to be solved. Not one of you can answer satisfactorily for himself : much less for all, or any of the others who surround him. Self-love, and an inherent desire of escaping hell, and obtaining heaven, probably deceive many of

you, and cause you to imagine that, if you are not of the number of the perfect, you are not of the number of the reprobate. It is of the utmost consequence, therefore, that you should be undeceived on this point, and that you should have some rules to go by, in order to ascertain whether you are what Christians ought to be, or whether you are no better than professed worldlings.

It is probable that they, who labour the most strenuously in the great work of sanctifying their souls, will be more inclined to rank themselves in the number of the imperfect and tepid Christians, than the imperfect themselves will be : and the reason is, because true piety humbleth itself, whereas ungodliness seeketh to be exalted. It will not be improper, therefore, to hold the mirror of Christian piety before your eyes, that the just may be comforted, and the imperfect undeceived.

The first and leading feature of true piety, is a sincere and ardent love of God,—a love of him in preference to every thing else ;—a love, that consists not merely in words, nor in the imagination, but a love which shows itself, and proves its reality by a perfect conformity with the laws of God, and a strict observance of his commandments. This is the principal feature of true piety—the only real criterion, whereby you may decide whether the God of love, the Holy Spirit, reside in your souls or not.—Examine it attentively, and compare it impar-

tially with that spirit of piety which you feel in your own breasts. It is a love that is sincere and ardent. Like a fire, it is always aspiring higher. It inflames the whole soul, and inflames it more and more. It causes her to feel a disrelish for the transitory enjoyments of this world, and to be solicitous only for the possession of those eternal good things, which will never be taken from her. It causes her to use this world, as if she used it not : that is to say, to make the things of this world contribute to her sanctification, instead of allowing business, interest, or pleasure, to take her away from the service of God, and induce her to neglect her duties. It causes her to have her conversation in heaven, by having the fear of God always before her eyes, by thinking frequently, and almost constantly, on his adorable presence, and by seeking always to please him in the performance of the various duties of the day. What more shall I say ? Shall I run over the whole of the virtues enjoined by the gospel, and say, that it causes the Christian soul to practise them all without reproof ? This would not be saying too much. *Love is the fulfilling of the law.* (Rom. xiii.) He that loves truly and sincerely, is a perfect Christian : because this love induces him to promote the honour and glory of his Beloved with all his powers, and to hate and avoid every thing which is displeasing to him with all his strength.—Were we capable of entering into the interior of the heart of man, we should

find that his piety and morality were uniformly in proportion to the sincerity of his love of God. We should find that, the more he was animated with this divine virtue, the more he was exempt from the usual imperfections of human nature ; that he was more humble, and meek, and charitable ; that he bridled his tongue with more care, and abstained from defamation and scandal with more solicitude ; that he was more free from peevishness, ill-nature, and passion ; that he was uniformly more cheerful in his behaviour ; more compassionate to others in the midst of prosperity ; and more patient and resigned, under the pressure of poverty. We should find that the man, who was the most eminently imbued with the spirit of love, was the most perfect in the practice of these and of all other Christian virtues ; and that the man, who was deficient in this holy virtue, was deficient in proportion, in the observance of the moral duties of the gospel. Were we capable of entering into the interior of the heart of man, we should find that this was universally the case.

You, therefore, who seem to pride yourselves, like the Pharisee, on your numerous virtues and good works, enter into an examination of all your failings. You, who seem to stand, who consider yourselves as more pious, or more perfect than the rest of men ; who imagine, that you are going on in the strait road to heaven, and that you have little or no cause for fear and

trembling, look into the state of your souls, and examine the general tenor of your conduct. Did you but divest yourselves of self-love and self-esteem, or could you but see yourselves through the same medium as you are seen by your intimate friends, you would probably entertain a far different opinion of your virtues, from that which you now entertain. The truly humble are debased in their own eyes ; and, at the time when they are objects of complacency, in the sight of God, they hardly dare to lift up their eyes to heaven, but, conscious of their unworthiness, strike their breasts with the Publican, and cry aloud : *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.* You, therefore, who take yourselves to be something, strive to observe what opinion is entertained of your piety by your oldest and most intimate friends. Long intimacy and familiarity draw aside the veil which conceals our weaknesses. Their eyes are open to your defects, whilst yours are blinded by long habit and self-love. They, perhaps, behold in you an over-eagerness for the things of the world, of which you are not conscious,—or, a covetous disposition, an irritable temper, a proneness to rash judgment, an itching for defamation and scandal, a want of compassion for the spiritual or temporal necessities of your fellow members. They, perhaps, behold in you a certain self-complacency, on account of your regularity in the performance of your religious duties,—a kind of pride, on account of your imaginary state of perfection.

In a word, we may say almost to a certainty, that they behold in you many imperfections, of which you are totally unconscious, and which, if you were to see them yourselves, would be sufficient to humble you, and to instil into your minds that fear and trembling, which is felt by the most perfect servants of God.—Endeavour, therefore, to divest yourselves of that prejudice and partiality in favour of your virtues, and to scrutinize your conduct, as it is scrutinized by others ; I mean, by your old acquaintances and intimates. There is one exception, however, to be made. I would not have you to attend to the remarks of those who are notoriously addicted to scandal and defamation, because their disposition is to find fault with every person and with every thing ; and consequently, their testimony is not to be relied on.

This manner, however, of forming an opinion of the extent of your own piety, or of that of others, I do not allow to be infallible at all times, and on all occasions ; for it is not impossible, but that a hypocrite may counterfeit piety in such a manner as to impose on the credulity of the most intimate acquaintance ; and it not unfrequently happens, that the truly pious are exposed to the infamy of obloquy and disgrace. Yet we may safely declare, that to the imperfect, the self-conceited, and presumptuous disciples of Christ, it will be always a safer guide to follow, than their own prejudiced ideas and fancies.

Proceeding, therefore, upon this plan, I exhort you to endeavour to ascertain, in what light your piety is viewed by your old and tried acquaintance. Do they in general reverence your virtues? Or do they pay no regard to your merit, and treat you as if you were no better than the rest of men? If so, depend upon it that there are defects in your piety, and such defects, which, if you were truly humble, you would not be ignorant of; and of which, were you truly virtuous, you would not be guilty. In proportion to the disrespect in which your piety is held by those, whom you may constitute your judges, or monitors, so far you may conclude that you are distant from perfection, and so far probably may it be said, that you are from partaking fully of those effects, which the Holy Ghost, had he been present within you, would have produced in your souls. If upon examination, therefore, you discover that your piety is held in very low estimation, you have reason to tremble for the safety of your souls. Let no time be lost. Begin immediately to discover and subdue your imperfections, to correct your failings, and to strive to attain perfection.

I readily acknowledge that many of those, who are not dissolute, but, on the contrary, lead sober and regular lives, are honest in their dealings, and diligent frequenters of the sacraments. But, if their piety consists of little more than the practice of the exterior duties

of religion,—if they feel little or nothing of the love of God,—if their solitudes, and cares, and fears, are all about this world,—and, although they may be reckoned moral, steady men, are yet discovered to be addicted to the weaknesses of human nature, to passions, hatreds, animosities, pride, self-sufficiency, and other failings, which the spirit of true piety abhors, what opinion is formed of them by their intimate friends and acquaintance? That they are what Christians ought to be? That they are going on securely, in the way which will lead them to eternal rest? No: they are considered as imperfect Christians. They are pointed at, as examples not fit to be followed. They give scandal to their religion, and cause the very name of piety to be ridiculed and scoffed at.—In fact, they themselves are not satisfied. In their serious moments, when they reflect on the approach of the great accounting day, or when they are preparing for the sacraments, and behold the multitude of their failings, and the few good works which they have performed, they feel alarmed,—they are convinced that a change of life is necessary,—they see that they are not walking in the narrow path, and that they are on the brink of the precipice. These are their sentiments in their more serious moments, however much they may flatter themselves, or however easy in mind they may seem to be at other times. Are there not many here present, who have experi-

enced these feelings? And can any other advice be given to them with propriety, than that they must labour more earnestly in the great affair of salvation, than they have hitherto done, or that their souls will be exposed to imminent danger of being led into the precipice?

—I do not say that such people as these are living habitually in mortal sin. The generality of their faults are probably only venial faults. But if these venial faults are considered by them as of little consequence, and are indulged with little restraint or remorse, will they not hinder the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working? Will they not dispose the soul to mortal sin? And consequently, will not the Christian, who makes light of small faults, easily fall into greater ones? You were taught by your catechism, even in your younger years, that these consequences would probably follow: and have you not serious cause to be alarmed, lest every thing that is evil come upon you, and perhaps at a time when you will feel little disposition and less power to fight against it? These reflections are seriously awful. The mind cannot dwell upon them, and remain unmoved.

You, therefore, of my present auditory, who have reason to apply these things to yourselves, think whilst you have time. Be convinced of the necessity of rousing yourselves immediately to energy and fervour in the service of God. Shake off that tepidity and sloth, which:

prevent you from fixing your affections solely on God, and on your souls, look behind you, and behold death and hell following you at a short distance. Fly from them with speed. Fly into the arms of your God : they are stretched out, ready to receive you. Endeavour to entertain habitually those sentiments, which you entertain when you are preparing for the sacraments. Strive to think now, as you will think at the hour of death. This disposition of mind will soon dispel that indifference, that listlessness, which has hitherto caused you to be negligent in your spiritual duties. Give peace, therefore, to your souls ; not the peace which the world giveth, but the peace which your blessed Lord purchased for you, and bequeathed to you.

But, if there be serious cause for alarm to those Christians who feel little solicitude to sanctify their souls more and more, and to advance continually in virtue, although otherwise moral steady men, what are we to say of those who are not moral, nor steady ; who, in addition to tepidity and sloth, are drunkards, profane swearers, lascivious, hard-hearted, avaricious, and proud ? Are we authorised, or is there sufficient reason to pass an unqualified sentence upon them, supposing that they continue in the same state ? They can stare hell in the face, and not tremble. They can brave the anger of an insulted God without a blush, and without fear. But what is to be the end

at last?—Oh! we will leave them to their own reflections. They have their serious moments, although perhaps they are but few, as well as other people; and then, like wicked servants, out of their own mouths they condemn themselves. They feel a foretaste, although they strive to smother that feeling as soon as possible, of that anguish, which they will feel hereafter, in its utmost rigour, for endless ages.

But, let us turn away from this frightful picture to a more cheerful prospect. Peace is purchased for us. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, do I give to you.* (John xiv.) Let us seek after this peace, by a truly virtuous life.—You, who behold imperfections in your conduct, strive to correct them, and animate yourselves to exertion by divine love.—You, who are negligent and tepid in the performance of your spiritual duties, and who feel little or no desire to advance in the ways of perfection, rouse yourselves from your lethargy, for the day of salvation is at hand.—And you, whose lives are stained with immoralities of a grosser kind, oh! break your chains asunder, and be free, and *enjoy the freedom with which Christ has made you free.* (Gal. iv.)—Let us all unite together, and endeavour strenuously to subdue the failings which have been hitherto unconquered. Let us labour to advance constantly in virtue. Let us not relax in our exertions, till such time as

we are put in possession of that eternal peace, which is prepared for us in the abodes of Sion, where we shall sing, for endless ages, *Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.* (Rom. vii.)

TRINITY SUNDAY.

ON REPROVING OUR NEIGHBOUR.

Cast first the beam out of thy own eye ; and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brothers's eye.

LUKE vi. 42.

THE advice, or rather the precept, which is given by our great Legislator to all his disciples in the words of my text, is expressed in terms, which may be easily understood by men of the lowest capacity. *Cast first the beam out of thy own eye*: that is to say, in the first place, whenever thou discoverest a failing in thy neighbour, look into thy own heart before thou reprehendest him either before others, or in private. If thou discoverest that thou hast failings, probably of greater magnitude, correct those failings in thyself, and then thou wilt be entitled to call thy neighbour to account, and to remonstrate with him. —In the second place, *cast the beam out of thy own eye*, that is, purify thy heart from the contagious leaven of pride ; suffer not thy judg-

ment to be warped by malice or ill-will ; banish far from thee the spleen of envy, and the evil impressions caused by the calumnies and slanders which thou hast heard concerning him, and thou wilt see clearly into the nature of the failings which thou discoverest in thy brother, and wilt be able to reprehend him in the manner which is best calculated to produce its effect. ——— *Cast first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote from thy brother's eye :* that is, examine impartially thy own failings : give them the magnitude which they actually possess, and they will appear as beams in thy eye. Then look at the failings of thy neighbour with the eye of charity ; attribute no more criminality to him than what is evidently proved against him ; think no evil, except when the evil is manifestly beyond dispute : and his failings will appear as nothing more than moles or specks, when compared with thy own irregularities. These are the various meanings of the words of my text, and they are so many subjects, which ought to claim a share of your attentive consideration.

It is but too true, my brethren, that the greater number of mankind have corrupted their ways, and that a man of unblemished character is seldom to be found. But, although the depravity of the times obliges us to make this acknowledgment, it does not follow that we are allowed by the rules either of justice or prudence, to condemn individuals, or to publish

their failings. A great discretion is required in things of this nature. I speak not of defamation and scandal. These are vices ; and there is no one, however confined may be the extent of his spiritual learning, but knows that they are strictly forbidden at all times and in all cases. I speak only of reprehending our offending brother, and endeavouring, according to the words of my text, to *take out the mote from his eye* ; and I say, that great discretion is to be observed in offices of this kind.

In the first place, we ought to have in view the good of our neighbour, and a reasonable hope that our remonstrances will be productive of good. To withdraw a sinner from evil ways is the greatest act of charity ; but when we foresee that the attempt will not be kindly received by the offending party, we expose ourselves to the danger of doing more harm than good. When, therefore, we discover any thing that is reprehensible in another, we ought to examine the attending circumstances, before we reprove him. We ought to ascertain whether his disposition, or his temper, will suffer him to listen favourably to our remonstrances, or whether it be probable that his pride will be hurt, and his anger enkindled. If the latter, then it would be adviseable to observe silence. For, what other effect could be expected, were we to intrude our good offices to take the mote from another's eye in opposition to his will, than that we should aggravate the evil, and add

to his criminality?—Much, however, depends on the authority, which we possess over the person. It is the duty of the pastor to reprehend his flock, collectively in his public discourses, and individually in his private conferences; and this, *in season and out of season*. It is the duty of parents and superiors to correct the failings of those under their charge, without any regard to their temper, or their disposition. The union there is between husband and wife gives a certain authority to both to admonish each other; and the ties of consanguinity and friendship give a kind of liberty to brothers and sisters, and intimate acquaintance, to remark on each other's conduct, and to reprove when there is just cause of reproof. Mildness, however, must be observed by these on such occasions, and care must be taken not to give offence.

But, whoever we may be, or whatever may be our authority, before we undertake to reprove others, we ought to look into ourselves, and correct our own failings. For, what good can be expected from our remonstrances, if the person, to whom we speak, has it in his power to reprove us for faults of, perhaps, greater magnitude? May he not justly retort upon us, in the words of scripture, *Physician cure thyself?* (Luke 4.) In fact, universal experience proves that the admonitions even of a Pastor, or of a parent or superior, however merited they may be, are seldom productive of any real good,

when the admonishing party is known to be addicted to any vice, or even when it is known that they do not show forth in their lives the example of Christian virtues. And if this is to be said of the remonstrances of pastors and superiors, with more reason may it be said when friends reprove friends, and equals reprove equals.

This, however, I say, not for the purpose of deterring you from endeavouring to recall a friend from his vicious ways. My object is, to induce you, as often as you witness failings in a neighbour or a friend, to turn your eyes to yourselves, to examine your own imperfections, and to give as full scope to your zeal in calling yourselves to an account, as you are disposed to give to your zeal for your neighbour's reformation.—My object is, to induce you to correct your own failings, or in the words of my text, to *cast out the beam from your own eye*, in order that your remonstrances may make the deeper impression on your brother, and become the happy instrument for removing the mote which is in his eye.

This, my brethren, is advice of serious importance. For, if it be incumbent on any of us to reprove others, it undoubtedly is incumbent on us to remove the obstacles to the success of our reproofs, as far as those obstacles exist in ourselves. If, therefore, the success of our reproofs is prevented by our own failings, we are as guilty in the sight of God, as if we

made no reproof at all. This, however, is a point seldom attended to. Men are eager to reprove others, even at the time when they themselves are more deserving of reproof. Men readily discern the mote in another's eye, and notice it; and the beam, which is in their own eye, they notice not. And what is the consequence? Their reproofs give offence, oftentimes are succeeded by coolness, and sometimes by breach of friendship.—This is easily accounted for. The nature of man is such, that, however conscious he may be himself of his own failings, he is not pleased when they are noticed by others. Pride being his ruling passion, he considers it a humiliation, a disgrace, to be admonished of a criminal action. Although the admonition may be worded in the most delicate manner, although the monitor may be on terms of the strictest friendship, it too frequently happens that it causes anger, that anger produces recriminations and abusive language, and that it all ends in quarrels and ill-will. Hence it is, that a friend seldom dares to interfere, and candidly and honestly remonstrate with a friend, when he discovers any impropriety in his conduct. This is to be lamented, particularly as it gives rise to evils of another kind,—evils, which attach criminality to him, who ought to have admonished his brother of his failings, and who did not. The evils of which I speak, are backbiting, detraction, and defamation. For, who is there that has not

experienced within himself a desire to talk to others about the failings of a friend, when he dare not remonstrate with him in person ?

Private remonstrances, however, would be more frequently attended with a good effect, were a person to be always animated with good intentions when he gives the admonition. Every sentiment of pride, envy, and jealousy, ought to be banished from the mind. Every human or selfish motive ought to be rejected ; and no other sentiment entertained than that of sincere friendship, and of pure solicitude for the welfare of the person reproved. And this ought not to be concealed in the interior of the heart, but to appear exteriorly in such a manner, as to be evident to the person whom we seek to reclaim. Oh ! when a friendly interposition of this kind takes place between a man and his passions ; when the consequences of vice are painted in the strongest colours by the hand of sincere regard, when the most cogent reasons for a reform of life flow from the lips of disinterested charity ; where is the man who could take offence ? Where is the man, with any sentiment of religion remaining in him, who would not be inclined to look seriously into himself, and feel a certain kind of desire of extricating himself from the ways of sin ? Where is the man who would not feel an increase of friendship for the man who thus interested himself for his eternal welfare ? These

are the feelings, which I fondly presume would be experienced by the greater number here present, were a friend to remonstrate with them in the manner above described.

But, were a person to come in a bold assuming manner, with the haughtiness of pride beaming on his countenance, and arraign a friend or a neighbour for his bad conduct, what would result from it, but indignation and contempt? Or, were a person, who was pushed on by envy, or jealousy, or other selfish motive, to make the remonstrance, what other effect would be produced, but scorn and disgust? Seldom, however, it is that a person, who is animated by the above named feelings, condescends to go to an offending neighbour, and remind him of his faults. People of this description, generally follow a different line of conduct. Instead of candidly and honestly speaking their sentiments to the offending party, they dastardly gratify their pride, or indulge their spleen, by rehearsing his failings behind his back. And how enormous is the guilt which they incur thereby! Pride, envy, ill-will, &c. are, of themselves, hateful in the sight of God, and disgusting in the eyes of mankind: but when these vices lead into the excesses of defamation and scandal, how aggravated is the guilt! Nevertheless, where is the man, in common life, who is proud and haughty, and who does not endeavour to blacken the

characters of others ? And where is the man, who is addicted to defamation and scandal, and is not proud ? Where, again, 'is the man, who is envious and spiteful, and who does not take every opportunity of speaking against those, who are the objects of his spleen ? —And are these authorised to take the mote out of their brother's eye, or, are they pursuing the means calculated for that purpose ? No : they themselves know, that they are not doing what will benefit their neighbour ; and happy would it be, if they knew, with equal certainty, that they were doing the most serious injury to themselves. Oh ! why will they not endeavour to cast the beam out of their own eye, before they ridicule, criticise, or gratify their own envious disposition, at the sight of the mote, which is in their brother's eye ! Why will they not study the spirit of Christian charity, and do to others, that which they wish others to do to them !

At all times it is our duty to follow the rules of propriety and justice, when we reprove our neighbour. Although we may not be influenced by pride and envy, we are not to listen even to the dictates of self-love. Our neighbour's failings we ought to weigh, as impartially as we weigh our own. We are not to favour ourselves, any more than we favour them : or, rather, if any difference is to be shown, we ought to be more lenient to them than we are to ourselves.

We ought to show mercy to them, as we wish mercy to be shown to us ; and we ought to judge them, as we ourselves hope to be judged hereafter. This is the language of the gospel. —When, therefore, we witness a fault in our neighbour, it is our duty to act by him, as we act by ourselves : that is, that we attribute not to him more criminality, than positive evidence attaches to him, and that we think no evil of him, beyond what we know that he is guilty of. As to our own faults, we know, or ought to know, the enormity of our transgressions, and the depravity of our hearts. But, as to our neighbours, we know but little, beyond what appears externally. We know not the secrets of their hearts. We know not what is the extent of their guilt, nor what plea of excuse they may have, in the sight of God. This is all concealed from us. Consequently, it is our duty to pass the most favourable sentence on them, and the most severe condemnation on ourselves. The great Searcher of hearts will pass an equitable sentence on all, because all hearts are open to him. But as no heart is open to us, except our own, it is our duty to judge ourselves, with the same severity as we shall be judged hereafter ; and to suspend our judgment, or, at least, to make every allowance for those, the secrets of whose hearts are concealed from us. In this sense it is that we are exhorted, in the words of my text, to consider the *beam* that is in our own eye, that is to say,

to weigh our transgressions in the scales of the sanctuary; and to affix to them that serious enormity, which is affixed to them in the sight of God : and to consider the failings of others, as nothing more than *motes* in their eyes ; and for this reason, because it is not allowable for us to weigh their guilt, or calculate its extent. Our neighbour is not our servant. He belongs to another. And *who are we, that we judge another man's servant ?* (Rom. xiv.) *Revenge is mine, saith the Lord.* (Ibid. xii.)

Ah ! were we guided on all occasions by this gospel maxim, how much would it contribute to our peace ! Not that we are required to rank ourselves in the lowest place, and imagine that our sins are actually greater in the sight of God, than those of other people. No : although such a sentiment of humility and self-condemnation would not be reproveable, yet it is not necessary. And the reason is, because we are not required to make comparisons between ourselves and others. What is required is, that we give every due degree of enormity to our own sins, and to think the most favourably of the faults of others; knowing that God alone is acquainted with the nature of their guilt, and that he alone is their judge. Thus, although in the sight of God, others may be far greater sinners than we are, our own faults will appear the greatest in our eyes : they will appear as beams, and those of our neighbours, will appear only as motes or specks.—Senti-

ments such as these, will produce very beneficial effects in our souls. They will stimulate us to labour assiduously to correct these failings. They will humble our pride, and convince us that, unless we offer violence to ourselves, we shall not possess the kingdom of heaven. They will carry us on towards perfection: and when we find it expedient to admonish a brother of a fault, they will give weight to our words, and contribute much to their producing the desired effect.

Oh! my brethren, let us then attend to the advice of our Saviour, and *cast out the beam that is in our own eye*. Let us be convinced that no other motives will authorise us, to attempt to *cast the mote from our brother's eye*, but the motives of charity, or the desires of procuring his greater good. Although a woman be discovered by us in the act of adultery, as was the woman in the gospel, let us not be hurried beyond the bounds of duty. Let us reclaim her, if we can. But if no prospect of success appear, let us leave her, or any other whom we may discover sinning, to their own conscience, and to God: and not give vent to our abhorrence of the sin, by accusations, defamations, and scandals: for it is said to us, as it was to the Jews: *he that is without sin, let him cast the first stone at her*. (John viii.)

Oh! my brethren, as far as is consistent with our duty, and with our temporal and eternal welfare, let us shut our eyes to the failings

of others. Let us look to our own faults, and correct them. Then, whatever may be the lot of others, we, ourselves, shall be walking in the footsteps of the saints ; and, if we persevere to the end, the most confident expectations may be entertained, that we shall hereafter be made partakers of their rewards.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

JOHN vi. 56.

ON this day, my brethren, we are invited by the Church, to return thanks to God, for the inestimable banquet which is provided for us in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and to pour forth our souls in tender effusions of love, for the God who has manifested his love for us in this wonderful manner.—In the first ages, no particular day was set apart for public thanksgiving on account of this mystery. Neither was it necessary. The faithful in those times, were all united together in the belief of this article of our faith, and all, with one accord, made it the subject of their devotion, every time that they assisted at the solemn celebration of it. But in the latter ages, this mystery has become the

scorn and derision of multitudes of her deluded children, and consequently, something more seemed to be required from the faithful, in order to make amends for that honour and glory, which the fanaticism of heresy was endeavouring to wrest from the clemency and love of the Omnipotent. For that reason, the Church instituted this festival, and ordained, that it should be celebrated with more than usual solemnity and splendor.

This being the intention of the Church, I will endeavour, in as easy and familiar terms as possible, to describe the inexpressible love of God, manifested to men in this mystery, and the return of love which gratitude requires that man should make to God, for the blessings which it imparts to him.

Whence is this to me, said St. Elizabeth to the Blessed Virgin, *that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Luke i.) These were the sentiments of humility which animated the soul of this holy woman, when she received a visit from Mary. So great, so wonderful a mystery, did she behold, in the union of God with man, that she considered herself unworthy of a visit even from her, in whose womb this great God was become incarnate. If she had been favoured with a visit from the God incarnate himself, what would have been her sentiments! And yet, my brethren, this is the favour which we, unworthy as we are, receive in the sacra-

ment, which we solemnly commemorate on this day.

The Royal Prophet, contemplating the majesty of God, and the nothingness of man, declared that we were unworthy that the Lord should look upon us, or that he should even think of us : *what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst cast an eye upon him!* (Ps. viii.) If, then, according to this inspired writer, we are unworthy to occupy a place in the mind of God, what ought we to think of his wonderful condescension in allowing us to appear in his presence? What ought we to think of that command of love : *come to me all you that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you?* (Matt. xi.) What ought we to think, when we hear the great God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain,—who extends from the east to the west,—who poises the whole universe in the palm of his hand,—who created all things, the earth with all its beauties, and the firmament with all its wonders : and who created them with no greater exertion of his power, than the mere declaration of his will : *he spoke, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created,* (Ps. xxxii.)—who preserves them all in regular order,—and who could, by a single word, reduce them all again to their original nothing:—what ought we to think, I say, when we hear this great God saying to us : *come to me, and I will refresh you!*

And who are we, that we should be so eminently distinguished by the great Creator? A man is here to-day, and to-morrow he is no more. His glory is like a flower, which in a few hours is withered and forgotten. Were he to be elevated like the cedar of Lebanon, in the twinkling of an eye he is laid prostrate in the dust, and his place is found no more. Every individual amongst us may say, that there was no necessity whatever for his existence. We were neither wanted, nor thought of, before we came into the world; nor shall we be wanted, or thought of, for any long time, after our departure from it. The world existed, and every thing went on as well before we were, as it does now; the same it will do after our decease.—Notwithstanding, however, this our nothingness, how many are there who pride themselves on their imaginary perfections! Some consider themselves worthy of notice, on account of the strength of their understanding, and their superior abilities. Were a comparison to be drawn between them and the brute creation, they would be worthy of admiration. But what are they, when compared with the Lord of All? They have not understanding sufficient, to conceive how a leaf, a blade of grass, or the most insignificant part of vegetation is produced. And yet, these are productions, which we behold with indifference, merely because the other works of the Almighty appear infinitely more wonderful.—Others

pride themselves on their seeming importance, and consider that riches, titles, and honours, exalt them above their fellow-creatures. But what do these things add to their worth, in the sight of God? The greatest man that ever lived, is a mere nothing before him. And even in the sight of men, what is he but a speck, as it were, in the midst of the creation? At the distance even of one short mile, he is nearly invisible. Surrounded and hidden, by the immensity of God, who fills the vast expanse of heaven, he is lost to our sight. Such is man, although he appears so great in his own eyes, and dares to lift up his hand against the Lord of All, and say : *I will not serve*. Oh ! thou great Omnipotent Being, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst cast an eye upon him !*

Nevertheless, this great God says to us : *Come to me*. He not only says : *come to me*, but he engages even to come to us : *we will come to him, and will make our abode with him*. (John xiv.) How different are the ways of God from the ways of man ! Truly does he say : *my ways are not your ways*. (Isa. lv.) When a poor little worm of the earth, for man is no better than a worm, finds himself distinguished above his fellow-creatures, by the possession of wealth, learning, or other trifles, he looks down with contempt on others, who do not possess the same. The rich are generally exalted by pride, and lift up their heads above the lower

classes, as if they were superior beings; and consider, that they would be degrading themselves, were they to converse with them in a familiar manner.—The lower classes treat those that are below them with equal haughtiness; and even servants treat those, whose degree of servitude is inferior to their own, with overbearing disdain.—But the Great Omnipotent, notwithstanding his power and majesty, in the most friendly manner, says: *Come to me.* He does more; he says, that he will come to us, and make his abode with us.

And what is it that he can see in us, that should call forth such testimonies of love? Had we always treated him with due respect, been obedient to him, and had trembled at his words: had we been always sensible of our own nothingness, and with earnestness and humility had supplicated his mercies, then we might have said, that he loved us because we were his children, and the work of his hands. But our communications with the Deity have not been of this description. Instead of paying due respect, we have insulted the God of heaven; we have added outrage to outrage: we have declared, that we *would not serve.* This we have done, as often as we have relapsed into sin.—Instead of trembling at his words, we have despised his threats: we have defied him, as it were, to hurl the thunderbolts of his vengeance on our hearts. This we have done, as often and as long as we refused to do pe-

nance for our sins, and to be reconciled to him. —Instead of being humble in our own eyes, we have lifted up our heads to the clouds : we have claimed a share in his glory : we have dared to demand a place on his throne. This we have done, as often as we have suffered pride to take possession of our hearts : as often as we have arrogated to ourselves glory and honour, on account of the possession of riches, beauty, talents, or any other of his gifts. —Instead of supplicating his mercies by earnest and fervent prayer, we have received his gifts with indifference ; we have turned our backs upon him. This we have done, as often as we have omitted to return him thanks for his blessings, and as often as we have neglected our duty through human respect, or the love of created things.

And yet this eternal God, seeming to forget our offences and ingratitude, gives us the sweet invitation *to come to him*. Truly may we say, that his mercies are above all his works. We are sinners : and because we are sinners, he is graciously pleased to bear our infirmities, and to carry our sorrows. He was wounded for our iniquities ; he was bruised for our sins ; that by his bruises we might be healed. (*Isa. lii.*) Oh ! ye heavens, be astonished at this ! Could love, aided by Omnipotence, be carried to greater excess !

My brethren, let us dwell for a few moments on this incomprehensible mystery. The God, the omnipotent, the eternal God, before whom

the heavens and the earth fly away, and no place is found for them, invites us to come to him, in order to ease our pains, and to fill us with his blessings. *Come to me, all you that are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Notwithstanding our ingratitude and unworthiness, notwithstanding that we have been his declared enemies, he says that we may go to him, and that he will refresh us. And how will he refresh us? Will he admit us into his presence, and speak words of comfort to our afflicted souls? This would be a favour, which no earthly monarch would grant to a rebellious subject. Will he repay our ingratitude with blessings? Will he ease us of the burden of our sins, and restore us to the kiss of peace, although perhaps he may foresee that, at a future period, we shall rebel against him again? With difficulty could a father show such kindness to an only son. But this he will do, and infinitely more. He will give us himself: *I am the living bread, descending from heaven.* He will come into our souls: he will become our food. *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* He will incorporate himself with us: he will become one with us: *he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* And, lest the weakness of our nature should be overpowered, and sink into its original nothing, were he to come to us surrounded by legions of angels, and encompassed about with the splendors of inaccessible light,

he will veil himself under the familiar, the humble form of bread : *I am the bread of life.* What excess of condescension and abasement in the Lord of Glory ! And is it because he stands in need of us, or that we are necessary for his happiness ? By no means : *he that eateth of this bread, shall live for ever.* It is to give us life. It is to make us happy. It is through pure love for us. Without this love, our poor existence, weak and little as it is, would have been an existence of pain and misery, during our momentary abode on earth, and of inexpressible torments in the world to come : therefore he says : *he that eateth me, the same shall live by me : he hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* Oh ! the depth of the goodness and love of our God !

Truly, my brethren, if the narrow intellect of man can form any thing like an idea of any of the attributes of the Deity, it undoubtedly is the attribute of mercy and love. His omnipotence appears in the formation and preservation of the universe. But these are works, which do not extend to the limits of his almighty power. But that a God should debase himself : —that a God should stoop so low, as to come under the appearance of bread, to incorporate himself with us, who have been traitors, and rebels to his name, must certainly be the utmost extent to which love and mercy can be carried. Oh ! my brethren, if such love have not its due effect on our hearts in this life, how little

reason shall we have to complain of his justice in the next ! *What could he do more for his vineyard, which he has not done for it ?* (Isa. v.)

What effect, therefore, ought this love to produce in our souls ? Ought we to be confounded at the sight of our unworthiness and ingratitude ? Ought we to call on the mountains to cover us, and hide us from the face of him, whose infinite love so loudly condemns our crimes ? When our Lord offered to wash the feet of Peter, that Apostle exclaimed : *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ? Thou shalt not wash my feet for ever.* (John xiii.) Ought the same sentiments of humility to influence our minds, in this mystery, which so far surpasses the washing of the feet, and cause us to exclaim : “ Lord, dost thou come to me ? Thou shalt not come to me for ever.” No : this is not the humility required. Humble we *must* be ; but, when God knocks at the door of our hearts, we must not refuse him an entrance. He knows our unworthiness much better than we do ourselves, and yet he commands us to open to him, and admit him into our breasts : *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.*

Happy, however, would it be for the souls of men, had this humility greater influence on their minds, and was the real cause why they kept at a distance from the holy table. But the deep sense of their unworthiness seldom

produces this effect. Their affections are otherwise engaged. Their hearts are callous to divine love. The great, the eternal God, is not sufficient to create an interest in their minds, when put in competition with the things of the world. He calls to them : *Come to me.* And they reply, if not in words, at least by their actions, "I will not come." He says : *I will refresh you.* And they seem to reply : "I want not thy refreshment. I find a refreshment in the enjoyment of creatures, which I prefer to thine." He urges them, and says : *My banquet is ready : the Lamb is slain ; the Bread is descended from heaven, and all things are ready : come to the wedding.* And they answer : "I cannot come : my farm, my oxen, my business, my wife, my worldly interest and pleasure, occupy my whole attention. These are the objects of my affections, and not thee. When I am forced to it by the severity of thy menaces, I will come, and not before."

Oh ! my brethren, let not your conduct be like that of these unhappy men. Humble yourselves at the sight of your unworthiness ; but let not humility turn you away from the table of the Lord. You are invited to attend ; exert every effort of your soul to correspond with the invitation in a becoming manner. Taste and see how sweet is the Lord. Open your eyes, and ascertain whether you know your Saviour in the breaking of bread. Ah ! if we felt our *hearts burning within us, whilst he is*

speaking to us in the way, with what ardour, with what transports of love should we run to him ! How does the fond mother long for the moment, when her absent darling will be again folded in her arms ! And ought our love for God, the Lord of all, our happiness both in this world and the next, to be less ardent ? Ought creatures, dust and ashes of the earth, to be more dear to us than our Father who is in heaven ?

Run to him, therefore, my brethren. Prostrate yourselves at his feet. He calls you. He invites you. He importunes you. Were it that he granted this favour only to a chosen few, and this only once in their lives, after years spent in the strictest exercises of retirement, mortification, and penance : were it that he required that they voluntarily and totally renounced all created things, in order to be enabled to enjoy the personal presence of the Creator, nevertheless, what an extraordinary favour would it not be on his part ! If, therefore, his love extends to greater lengths : if he is pleased to come to us sinners, not only once, but as often as we are pleased to receive him, what gratitude ought we not to feel for the inestimable favour ! Ah ! if we loved him as he ought to be loved, our hearts would overflow with such transports of delight, we should feel such a hunger and thirst after this bread of life, that we should run to his holy table as frequently as possible : and when circumstances

prevented us, we should stretch forth our hands to him, and by our ardent sighs invite him to come and refresh our souls, by his invisible grace in a spiritual communion.

Celebrate this Festival and Octave, my brethren, with more than ordinary devotion. Frequently invite your Jesus into your souls, by fervent desires to be united with him : and in a particular manner, live a truly pious life, and approach as often to the holy table, as the director of your conscience deems it expedient for you.—Ah ! if you esteem it a happiness to know God, and to love God, keep not at a distance from him. If you frequently approach to him, he will, notwithstanding his infinity and your nothingness, infuse the sweets of love into your breasts ; and he will give you a fore-taste of that ineffable love, which will drown your souls in an ocean of delights, when united with him hereafter in the mansions of his eternity.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE CRIMINALITY OF NEGLECTING THE HOLY COMMUNION.

And they began all at once to make excuse . . . and they said, I pray thee, hold me excused, LUKE xiv. 18.

THIS parable was spoken by our Lord, for the purpose of exposing the ingratitude and inconsistency of those, who, wishing to *eat bread in the kingdom of God*, will not be at the trouble of preparing themselves for it, by partaking of the sacred banquet, which he was to provide for them, during their abode in this place of exile.—The Church appoints it to be read at this time; because, this time being set apart for the annual commemoration of this mystery of love, it conveys a salutary admonition to those, among Christians, who, influenced by worldly motives, neglect the great means of sanctifying their souls, on which their salvation depends. It provides, likewise, a seasonable opportunity for the pastor to remonstrate with those of his flock,

who neglect the sacraments, to expose before their eyes the ingratitude of which they are guilty, and to declare to them the sentence, which will be pronounced against them, when they appear before the tribunal of their Judge.

—The parable, indeed, does not determinately express its application to the subject of the Blessed Eucharist; but, like the other parables of our Saviour, they are intended to be applied to the subject, to which they appear to be peculiarly applicable. Now, what banquet has our Lord prepared for us, more delicious, more conducive to our welfare, than the banquet of his own most precious body and blood? What banquet can be rejected with more criminality, than such a banquet, when worldly motives are consulted and followed? and, against whom can such a sentence be more justly pronounced, than the concluding sentence of the parable, speaking of the eternal joys of the kingdom of heaven, *not one of these men shall taste of my supper?*

This being, therefore, the chief object of the parable, I will enlarge upon it in this discourse. Happy should I have been, had no cause existed for my remarks. But, unfortunately, the table of the Lord is neglected by too many. By some, it is considered that once in the year is sufficient: by others, that even once in the year is not necessary for their salvation. And, when we consider the regular attention of the primitive Christians—the men, who best knew

what were the ordinances of their Lord, and what were the benefits to be derived from this holy sacrament, what ought to call forth the severity of my remarks more forcibly, than the conduct of such unworthy members of our holy body, who suffer themselves for such a length of time, to be called away from the sacred banquet, by the unhallowed excuses of duties to be paid to business, farm, oxen, or wife? Attend, therefore, to my reflections. But, let me exhort you, to attend to them, not as uttered by way of reproach, but as the effusions of a heart, burning with zeal for your welfare, and desiring nothing more than your observance of those things, which essentially appertain to your peace.

The task of securing the salvation of our souls, is a work of no small difficulty. It requires constant attention, and constant exertion. It must be carried on by many a conflict, and by many a victory. It will not be completed, until the summons for quitting this, our earthly dwelling, is put in execution. Our own natural strength, is not competent to the task. We must have strength from above, or we shall not be able to advance one step in the undertaking. On account of this difficulty, or, we may say, impossibility, were we left to ourselves, our Lord, in the excess of his love, has been pleased to provide means of our acquiring that strength and fortitude, which we stand in need of. He has prepared for us a

table, where we may refresh ourselves with bread from heaven. He has engaged to come himself, and be our food, and our strength. Formerly he sent an angel to the Prophet Elias, and, by means of an hearthen cake, invigorated, and enabled him to continue his journey on foot, for forty days and forty nights, until he arrived at the mountain of God—Horeb. For us, he has prepared a heavenly bread, and he presents it to us in the Holy Eucharist: by the means of which, if worthily received, we shall be invigorated with strength from above, and enabled to conquer every difficulty, to overcome every obstacle, and to continue our journey undisturbed, unless we raise obstacles of our own formation, during the forty days and nights of our earthly sojournment here, until we arrive at the mountain of God—the *heavenly Sion*.—However arduous the task, therefore, of securing our salvation, however impotent our natural weakness,—however incompetent our powers, when left to ourselves, to perform that great work, we have abundant means provided for us, by which we may be elevated above the weakness of human nature, and may be brought forward in our journey towards the abodes of eternal peace.

Such are the blessings, which are to be received from a worthy participation of the body and blood of Christ, in the Holy Communion. The faithful, in every age of the Christian Church, were convinced of the truth of what I

now declare unto you. They knew the benefits that were to be derived from the participation of this holy sacrament. They suffered not many days to elapse without receiving it. Had they absented themselves from it, for a considerable length of time, they would have considered themselves almost as apostates from the faith. At least, they were convinced that, were they to absent themselves from this holy table, for a length of time, they would be deprived of the special graces of heaven, they would be exposed to the danger of being overpowered by the enemies of their salvation, and betrayed into the ways of sin. And, as the sanctification of their souls was their only solicitude, they were careful to embrace every means of promoting it, and of avoiding every thing that was prejudicial to it.

It is not my intention to insinuate, that the bread of life will alone preserve you from evil, or that it will ensure your justification in the sight of God, independently of a proper correspondence on your parts. A co-operation is expected, and although it is not for us to say, that that co-operation depends on your will, independently of the grace of God, it is required from you. This co-operation may be said to consist in a sincere hatred of sin, in sincere desires of being acceptable in the sight of God, in a real renunciation of the devil, with all his works, the world, with all its pomps, and the flesh

with all its temptations. These are points necessarily to be attended to, before the bread of life can be profitable to you. But, even for the performance of these necessary things, the holy Sacrament is to be your strength. Of yourselves, you are nothing : you cannot have so much as one good thought, that would avail you to salvation, without assistance from above. The table of the Lord, is to be your refuge : the banquet, which is prepared for you, is to invigorate your souls, and enable you to fulfil all your Christian duties. *He that eateth me, says our Lord, the same also shall live by me : he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* (John vi.) A co-operation, therefore, on our parts is necessary in order to render this sacrament available ; and the co-operation is to be produced by means of the sacrament itself.

It is said, by many, that prayer alone is necessary to obtain the assistance of God, and to enable us to resist the attacks of our spiritual enemies. But, in the warfare in which we are engaged, the Christian must not rely on one weapon alone : he must wield all the arms which his Saviour has provided for him. Prayer, undoubtedly, is available and necessary : but prayer alone, will not suffice. For, to what purpose would our Lord have instituted this invigorating sacrament, if we could have been sufficiently invigorated without it ? To what purpose would our Lord have declared, that by

eating him, we should *abide in him, and he in us*, if we could enjoy that close and intimate union, without receiving him corporally into our breasts? To what purpose would he have declared that, *if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever*, if we could have obtained eternal life without eating of it? Can it be supposed that our Lord would impose upon our credulity, by exaggerating the importance of this holy sacrament? Or, that he would squander away his love for us, in useless, or unnecessary institutions? No: my brethren, our wise Legislator was not a stranger to the nature of his own laws; nor was he ignorant of what was necessary for the welfare of his beloved creatures. Although prayer, and earnest prayer, be an indispensable duty, and although he himself said: *ask, and you shall receive*: nevertheless, he knew our weakness, and he knew our enemies, and, out of the excess of his love, he instituted this sacrament, for the purpose of drawing us nearer to himself, and of sheltering us, as it were, under his wings, against all dangers. This sacrament, therefore, cannot be neglected, without our salvation being exposed to danger.

Let me not, however, be understood to assert that the man, who neglects the sacraments entirely, or who has recourse to them, only when he is forced by the threats and anathemas of the Church, will invariably become a vitiated and depraved character, or that he will totally neglect the other duties of religion. These are

not necessary consequences. But this I assert, that such a man will never continue a true and faithful disciple of Jesus. His soul will not be animated with the true spirit of piety :—he will be tepid :—he will not aim at perfection :—he will not be advancing in the ways of virtue : but, on the contrary, be falling off, more and more :—he will feel little or no relish for his spiritual duties :—he will be more attentive to his worldly business, than to the sanctification of his soul :—he will, more and more readily, suffer the plea of self-interest, or sensual amusement, to take him away from the public service of the Church on Sundays and holidays :—he will feel a certain abhorrence for works of self-denial and penance, and he will refuse to perform, or submit to them, as often as any trifling excuse may present itself :—he will frequently fall into sins of one kind or another, and seldom, or never, be sincerely sorry for them : in a word, he will be deficient in the love of God, and the deficiency will increase. This will be the state of his soul, more or less : although perhaps, externally, he may appear to be a man of moral character. —And can such a man as this, be called a true disciple of Jesus ? Can such a man, be said to be walking in the narrow path which leadeth to life eternal ?

No : my brethren, be not deceived by any vain delusions. The Holy Eucharist is necessary for you : it is indispensable in a spiritual

life. It is the strength of Christians. It is the bread that is to bring us to life everlasting. By means of this holy sacrament we may receive grace, when united with sincere and humble prayer, and a pure conscience, to *live soberly, and piously, and godly, in this world*; (Tit. ii.) but, without it, we shall never be able to fulfil the duties of a christian life, in such a manner as to secure the salvation of our souls. Our Lord has declared that this bread, is *his flesh for the life of the world*: consequently, that the life of the world, that is, the salvation of souls, who live in the world, depends on their receiving it. He declared, that he, who *eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood, hath everlasting life*, and that he *will raise him up at the last day*: consequently, that he, who refuseth to eat his flesh, and drink his blood, hath not everlasting life abiding in him, and shall not be raised up to happiness at the last day. He declared, that he, who *eateth this bread shall live for ever*: and consequently, that he, who will not eat this bread, shall not live for ever in the regions of eternal bliss. These are the declarations of Truth itself. They are words which cannot be controverted; and the conclusions, which I have drawn from them, cannot be denied, without accusing our Blessed Lord of exaggeration, or inconsistency, by heightening the importance of the holy sacrament, beyond what it possessed.

I am well convinced that the greater number

of those, who neglect the sacraments, are sensible that they are not living up to the duties of their religion, and that they are exposing themselves to the danger, not only of being cut off in their sins, but of being deprived of that grace, which would enable them to live virtuously, were they to be preserved from sudden death. But they attempt to excuse themselves, some on one plea, some on another. But alas ! how vain are all their excuses ! Some with an air of candour and piety, say that "it is a very serious thing ; that it requires in the receiver dispositions, very different from those which they possess ; and that they must enter on a new course of life, before they shall be worthy to partake of so great a blessing." This we will readily allow. Their reasoning is just : and provided they were endeavouring to bring about this necessary reform, their excuse would find acceptance with God. But alas ! at the time that they attempt to justify themselves by this excuse, they are going on in their accustomed ways, without any serious thought of repentance. The excuse in their mouths amounts to nothing less than this : "I am now ranged under the standard of the Devil, and it is not proper for me to sit down at table with the friends of Jesus. I am now serving his mortal enemy, and without any intention at present, of leaving his service, and it will not do for me to approach my Lord and Saviour, and, like Judas, to give him the kiss of peace : I have not on the

wedding garment, nor do I intend to put it on ; and it will not do for me to place myself at the wedding table, when I know that I shall be *cast out into utter darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"——Thus it is that they abuse the riches of the mercy and goodness of God. Thus it is that they refuse to extricate themselves from the abyss of all evils, and pretend that they have an excuse for their conduct.

Others pretend to justify their neglect by saying, that they are so engaged in their farm, their oxen, their merchandize, their business, &c. that their thoughts are so distracted by the multiplicity of cares and solitudes, that they cannot bring their minds to that settled state, which is required for the receiving this holy sacrament with due fervour and devotion.——But how little will this excuse bear the test of examination ? For, whence does this perturbation of mind proceed ? Does it arise from confidence in the providence of God, and submission to his holy will, whether it be adversity or prosperity ? Or, rather, is it not because they are devoid of submission and confidence ? Yes : my brethren, the true and only reasons are, because they are too eager for the things of this world ;—because they fix their happiness here, and consider profit and pleasure as the greatest of all enjoyments ;—because they undervalue the importance of salvation, and seldom fix their thoughts on that, which ought to be the

constant subject of their meditations. And will such reasons as these find admittance in the sight of God? "Thou wicked servant," the Lord will say, "out of thy own mouth I condemn thee. Thou knewest that thy affection for earthly things was too great, and why didst thou not resist it? Thou knewest that thou couldst not attend properly to my service, on account of thy solicitude for the perishable things of the world: and why didst thou not immediately begin to *seek the kingdom of heaven and my justice, in the first place*, especially as I had declared, that *all other things should be given thee besides?*" (Matt. vi.) Thou knewest that those men, who refused my invitation to the wedding, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize, were condemned by me, as unworthy to partake of my banquet: and why didst not thou refuse to go to thy farm, and to thy merchandize, and throw thyself into my arms, with confidence and love? Thou wicked servant, out of thy own mouth I condemn thee."

Others, again, are convinced of the necessity of frequent communion, and every time that an indulgence is approaching, propose to make their peace with God, and receive the holy Sacrament. But, when the time is come, they put it off from day to day, till some unforeseen occurrence, or trifling excuse, causes them to defer it till the next indulgence. And so it goes on.—But, my brethren, can any conduct be

more senseless than this? Is not this fighting against the inspirations of heaven, and voluntarily torturing the mind with uneasiness and remorse? Besides, how insulting is it to the God of love! He knocks at the door of their souls,—he importunes them, by his inspirations, to open to him, and suffer him to enter into their breasts, and enrich them with all his treasures: and they put him off from day to day; and at length, order him, as it were, to depart, and to come again at a future period! Would any one, even of our fellow creatures, submit to such treatment? And can it be supposed, that the Sovereign Lord of all will pass it over, as a thing of no consequence? Listen to his words. He now stands at the door and knocks, as he expresses himself in the Revelations, (*Apoc.* iii. 20.) if any man hear his voice, and open to him the door, he will come into him, and sup with him, and he with him. But if he refuse to hear his voice, and open unto him, he will, as he declares by the Wise man, (*Prov.* i.) retire far from him; and when he shall seek him, at a future time, he shall not find him: when afflictions come upon him, he will laugh at his distress, and mock at his destruction.

Ah! my brethren, were you to appreciate, in a proper manner, the infinite treasure, which is to be found in the holy sacrament;—were you duly to reflect on that incomprehensible love, which induced your Saviour to give him-

self to you for the food and nourishment of your souls :—and were you to entertain such sentiments of love for him, as the love which he has manifested for you deserves, there would be no need of exhorting you to frequent communion. You would then feel a holy hunger and thirst, after this heavenly nourishment. You would be continually *proving yourselves*, as St. Paul exhorts, (1 Cor. xi.) for the worthy participation of it, by labouring to subdue all your disorderly inclinations, by fighting manfully against all your passions, and by striving to advance in the way of all Christian virtues. You would make one communion a preparation for the next. You would begin truly to abide in Jesus, and he would abide in you. You would feel, that you enjoyed more happiness than ever you enjoyed in the ways of the world. You would, in fact, be convinced, that you enjoyed as much happiness, as is possible for man to enjoy in this world : and your souls would overflow with delight, at the reflection, that you were preparing yourselves, in the most effectual manner, for the possession of that ineffable and incomprehensible happiness, which is in store for the faithful servants of God, in the mansions of eternal happiness hereafter.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE ENCOURAGEMENT HELD OUT TO REPENTING SINNERS.

There shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance..... LUKE xv. 10.

IN these words, my brethren, a consoling encouragement is held out to repenting sinners, to enter seriously into the ways of repentance. We are told, that there shall be joy before the angels of God :—that our repentance shall meet with the congratulations of the whole court of heaven :—and that we shall be hailed by them as future members of their happy society.

The nature of man prompts him to love, and to seek to be applauded for the worthy actions which he performs : and it is an encouragement to noble deeds, I speak in a worldly sense, to know that honours and renown will be

their reward. Here we are assured, that the approbation of all the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem will be given to our penitential labours—an approbation unmixed with envy ; and that the never-fading honours of eternity will be their reward. These are things, my brethren, which are truly worthy of our ambition : and the ambition which seeks after these, is the only ambition worthy of a Christian.—A few reflections on this subject may be of service to you, and contribute to excite in your minds more earnest desires of labouring effectually for your temporal and eternal welfare.

It is not often that worldly men consider their own actions, and their own interest, in the proper point of view. They are accustomed to reckon according to the ideas of their deluded fellow-mortals, and to consider that only as their interest, which is earthly and transitory. They are always thinking within themselves, what men will say of them. They are eager to merit their approbation, and solicitous to avoid their censures. In their public actions, in their charities, in their social conversations, in the performance of the relative duties of their state, and particularly in dress, it is the opinion of others that generally regulates their conduct.—It may be said, that the same mistaken ideas are sometimes encouraged and followed by those, who are regular in the external performance of religious duties. In their attendance at the holy sacrifice, in their manner

of deportment during their attendance, they are frequently biassed by these considerations. It sometimes even happens that men and Christians, through human respect, that is, through fear of what visitors, who call upon them, might say, were they to leave their company, or through shame, on account of their poverty or badness of clothing, absent themselves from the house of God during the public service of the Church on Sundays.

In monied matters alone, men pay no attention to the opinions of others. They follow their own plans. They attend minutely to their business. They look to what they call the one thing necessary. They care neither for approbation nor censure. Provided they can but encrease their substance, I speak of the world in general, they are satisfied, and care for nothing else.—The reason of this is, that self-interest is the ruling passion of the hearts of men : and when the applause or censure of others is calculated to clash with their interest, they invariably give the preference to that which is dearest to them.

But, my brethren, what interest is there that ought to be so dear to us as our eternal interest? What is the possession of the whole world, when compared with the salvation of our souls? And what is the applause of men, or the censure of men, when compared with things of such infinitely greater magnitude?—Oh! my brethren, let us not be deceived by the false

glare of earthly possessions and honours. As Christians, we ought to fix our eyes on other prospects. Heaven ought to be the object of our ambition, and preparing for heaven the only object of our solicitude. Let us do this : and then, since human nature is fond of applause, applause will be given to us ;—applause, which will not puff up with pride, but an applause, which will be the greatest encouragement to deeds of heroism, and the greatest consolation in times of affliction.—We are informed by the words of my text, that our conduct is open to the inspection of a superior order of beings. We are informed, that the angels and saints of God not only fix their eyes upon us, but that they take an interest in what we do ;—that they are truly solicitous for our welfare ;—that noble and pious actions meet their approbation ;—and that the conversion of a sinner is a subject of joy to the whole court of heaven : *there shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance.* In what a dignified light does this place the nature of man ! Lift up your heads, my beloved brethren. Look up to the heavens. Behold the myriads of celestial spirits, who are witnesses of your conduct. Place a just estimation on their applause, and make it the business of your life to merit it.

Hitherto, perhaps, you have courted the approbation of men, and sacrificed your conscience, rather than expose yourselves to their

censures. Renounce such unworthy conduct. The angels are your spectators. Their approbation is alone worthy of your notice, and that approbation is at your command. Yes : whether you are busied in the public duties of life, or whether you are enjoying the sweets of retirement ;—whether you are intent upon God in prayer, or whether you are dispensing blessings among your afflicted brethren ;—whether you are offering up canticles of praise and thanksgiving to the God of love, or whether you are lamenting over your past transgressions, their eyes are fixed upon you, and their joy is increased in proportion to the merit of every action that you perform.

Hitherto, perhaps, it has seemed to you that the enjoyment of society, and the good-will of a pleasing circle of acquaintance, was one of the greatest blessings of life. But, here there is a society of a different kind ;—a society, between the members of which there is no envy, no malice, no want of love ;—a society, which, although at present invisible to the eyes of your body, is near unto you, and to which you will be united hereafter ;—a society, every member of which excels in dignity, in splendor, and in wealth, the greatest monarch that ever existed on the earth ;—a society, every member of which is animated with the greatest love for you, and solicitous that you should be united with them in glory.

What labours, what fatigues do the children

of the world cheerfully undergo ; what dangers, what obstacles do they surmount; what solitudes, what anxieties do they feel, in the pursuit of worldly honours and dignities ! And yet, if they can but acquire the esteem and applause of men ; if they can but be exalted above their fellow-creatures, and be reckoned amongst the great and illustrious characters of the age, they consider that they are well paid for their labours. Many there are, who cheerfully meet death itself, in the pursuit of what they call glory : which glory is nothing more than honours paid to their memories by surviving friends.—What empty rewards ! How unworthy of a Christian !

Their example, however, is an instructive lesson. It shows how eager the mind of man is in the pursuit of its favourite object. It shows what exertions may be made, and ought to be made, by you, were you sincerely in love with the things of eternity.—Oh ! what transcendent honours are prepared for you in the kingdom of your God!—honours, which are not to be blasted by the calumnies of enemies—honours, which will never be diminished by length of time.—Ah ! could you but behold, for a single instant, the whole court of heaven assembled in awful majesty and incomprehensible glory before the God of all majesty and glory, how little, how contemptible would all earthly glory appear ! How great would be your astonishment, to find that any thing that

you could do would give joy to that august assembly ! How ready would you be, to exert every power to do what would be pleasing in their sight ! And, were this the only reward awaiting your exertions, I am convinced that there is not one amongst you but would think that he was amply rewarded. But, my brethren, you are the interesting objects in this splendid scene. It is on your account that the angels of God rejoice. They rejoice, because you do works of penance. They rejoice, because they love you with an inexpressible love, and because they hope that you will be united with them in happiness hereafter.—These are honours, these are rewards indeed. These are truly encouragements to noble actions in the best of all causes.

Will you, then, my brethren, lie any longer grovelling on the earth ? Is it not a disgrace to human nature and to reason, that you should disregard such never-fading honours and glories ? Is it not a disgrace, that you should be biassed by men, and by the opinions of men, and that you should pay no attention to the approbation of the whole court of heaven ? Is it not a disgrace that you should covet, and indefatigably labour for the things of the world, and be little solicitous for the inheritance of the kingdom of God ? Oh ! let it not be said of any one amongst you. Take your eyes from this wretched world, and fix them on heaven. What will the applause of men avail you, if you are objects of censure and reproach before the angels in heaven ?

And what injury will you receive from the censures of men, if your conduct is approved of by the friends of God? Of what advantage will all the things of this world be to you, if you do not obtain possession of those of the next? and what real detriment will it be to you to be poor, and wretched, and despised in this land of exile, if you are but happy hereafter? Yes: fix your eyes on heaven. There alone will you find objects worthy of your attention. There alone will you find honours that are worthy of your ambition.

You have already, I hope, given joy to the spirits of God, by forsaking the ways of sin, and by sincere repentance. Go on in the great work. You have as yet, probably, a great deal to do, before you will be prepared for the society of the just made perfect. To bring forth worthy fruits of repentance, is a work of time. The justice of God must be satisfied: and that satisfaction is great, in proportion to the number and enormities of your offences. Your failings have been, and still continue to be, manifold: and much remains to be done, before it can be said, that you are perfect in the ways of God. Examine this subject for a few moments. The time has been, when you had too much of the love of yourselves, and too little of the love of God: too much solicitude for your temporal, and too little for your eternal welfare: when you set too great a value on the mammon of iniquity, and too little on the treasures of grace. How are matters now, in these respects?

Have you not as yet a great deal to do?—The time has been, when you were addicted to vices of one kind or another, some, to swearing; others, to intemperance, to lust, to anger; others, to lying, to defamation, to hatred, to revenge; others, to dishonesty, to covetousness, to envy; others, to pride and vanity. How have all these failings been corrected? Are there no remnants of them to be found in your conduct? How have your past transgressions, in these points, been atoned for? Is there no debt of satisfaction remaining? Can you flatter yourselves that there is not a great deal to be done yet, before all things are perfect?—With respect to your relative duties, the time has probably been, when you were deficient in the performance of them. As *married people*, you are bound to love and cherish each other, to bear up with each other's failings, to observe the rules of modesty and decency between each other, in your private communications: to go hand in hand in bringing up your children in the fear of God, and instructing them, as far as your knowledge goes, in the principles, and in the duties of their religion. Are you, and have you always been, irreproachable in the observance of these duties?—As *children*, you were bound to honour, respect, and obey your parents: and, in more advanced years, to attend to their necessities, both corporal and spiritual.—As *masters*, you were bound to consider your dependants as

your fellow-creatures, and, in the exercise of authority, never to forget the rules of mildness and compassion, which characterise the true disciple of the humble Jesus. — As *servants*, it was your duty to fulfil the obligations of your state, cheerfully and faithfully, not merely for the sake of your hire, but principally for the love of God : and to honour and obey your masters, whether they were gentle or froward.

— As *Christians*, in general, you were required to cherish a love for all mankind, enemies as well as friends ; to deal out your bread to the hungry, and your drink to the thirsty ; to endeavour to relieve the distresses of the afflicted, whether corporal or spiritual : and to let your light so shine before men, that the tepid, and the indolent, might be brought to glorify God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Have there not been many deficiencies in these respects during your past lives ? And are there not many deficiencies even at the present time ? Ah ! too probable it is that you have yet a great deal to do, before you have either atoned for the past, or attained to that state of perfection, to which every Christian ought to aspire.

Take courage, therefore, my brethren, and do not delay. The angels of God are waiting, if the expression may be allowed, with anxious solicitude, to witness your exertions in this holy cause. Every vice that you subdue, every good work that you perform, every worthy act

of penance that you do, will be a subject of joy to them. Can you wish for greater encouragement? You might labour and toil to the end of life, in the cause of the world, and never excite the attention, or gain the esteem of the great ones of the earth. But by labouring strenuously in the cause of God and your souls, you will gain the approbation, and acquire the esteem of all the Angels and Archangels, of all the Powers and Dominations, of all the Cherubim and Seraphim of the heavenly Jerusalem. Truly astonishing it is, that such honours and applauses should be so little esteemed by men, who call themselves Christians, and whose great ambition is honour and applause!—How exalted is the nature of man! how dignified! and how much is it degraded by those, who mind earthly things, and who covet, in the first place, the honour and esteem of mortal men!

Stand up, my brethren, for your original dignity. Heaven deigns to notice you: strive to make yourselves worthy of the notice of heaven. Angels are ready to applaud you: strive to make yourselves worthy of their applauses. Despise all that passes with time. Fear not the censures of men. In fact, you will have no cause to fear them: for the censures of men are seldom or never directed against the Christian, who serves his God with his whole heart and soul. Were you to attempt to associate God with the world; were you to

follow virtue only by halves, then you would be censured and ridiculed. But, true sterling piety will gain admirers: the most dissolute cannot withhold their applause. So congenial to the heart of man is pure and unadulterated piety, that none can refrain from admiring it. Embrace it, therefore, and you will become spectacles worthy both of angels and men. But, above all, you will be laying up treasures for yourselves. You will be appeasing the anger of God, excited by your former sins. You will be making yourselves more acceptable to him. You will be encreasing in his love. You will be fulfilling his holy will, and you will be preparing yourselves for the possession of your inheritance in his eternal kingdom. Then *you will be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built into a habitation of God in the Spirit.* (Eph. ii.)

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON HUMILITY.

Simon Peter fell down at Jesus's knees, saying: depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.....LUKE v.

THIS address of the chief of the Apostles to his Lord, is truly characteristic of the virtues of Christian piety and humility. A manifest interposition of Divine Providence, in favour of him and his poor brethren, had been exhibited, and, beholding the great Author of the wonder present before him, he was overwhelmed with confusion. The sense of his own unworthiness struck him with awe, and he entreated the Lord of glory to depart from a man, whose sins made him an object fitter for the exercise of his severe judgments, than of his tender and extraordinary mercies.

This humility of Peter, is a model worthy of the imitation of all Christians. We are all favoured with blessings far above the reach of our deserts. We are sinners: and on that

account we are unworthy of any special interference of the mercies of God. Our unworthiness is increased in proportion to the number, and the enormity of our transgressions. The moment that we fell away from God, by sin, that moment we became objects worthy only of his indignation; and, had we proceeded according to the rules of strict justice, we ought to have renounced the hope of receiving farther testimonies of his bounty, and to have exclaimed, in the words of my text : *depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

But, alas ! how little do we consider our unworthiness ! How seldom do we weigh our demerits in the scales of the sanctuary, and value ourselves according to our real worth ! We all continue to look up to heaven for favour and protection, as if our innocence had never been defiled. We all continue to expect blessings, and rewards, as if we had never been otherwise than good and faithful servants. Oh ! my brethren, let us begin, now at least, to humble ourselves in the sight of God. He knows what we are, and he requires that we endeavour to know ourselves : for *to whom shall he have regard, but to him that is little and humble, and who trembleth at his words.* (Isa. lxvi.) A few remarks on this subject shall form the substance of this discourse.

Humility is not a virtue of human growth. According to nature, we are children of pride. We love to be courted and esteemed. Our eyes

are always fixed on ourselves. Our qualifications, either of body or mind, are always overrated in our own estimation. Our defects appear only of trifling importance, or, at least, much less than those of others. So great is the influence of self-love, that we not only entertain the most favourable opinion of ourselves, but we seem to think that others ought to acknowledge our claims, and give us the same exalted character as we give ourselves. Thus, we seem to require that the actions we perform should be applauded by others :—that our qualities of body or mind—beauty, dress, deportment, agreeableness of manners, learning, abilities, and all the other things, on which we pride ourselves, should engage their particular attention, and attract their admiration :—that all our imperfections and faults, provided they are not downright of an immoral kind, should be overlooked, excused, or concealed, with the same care and solicitude, as they are by ourselves :—in a word, that others should do to us, not as we do to them, but as we do to ourselves. Actuated by this corrupt principle, we seem to think that we are the first amongst the creatures of God. We are always comparing ourselves with others, and always giving the preference to ourselves. This is the picture of human nature, when under the influence of its own depravity, and when the virtue of humility is despised or neglected.

But, my brethren, how vain, how arrogant

does all this appear, when exposed to examination! How unworthy it is of a rational being! We know, or we ought to know, that these qualities, on which we pride ourselves, exist only in our imagination : and we ought to know, likewise, that the world, which frequently does not applaud the man who possesses real virtues and perfections, will never lavish its admiration on us for qualities, which it is manifest to all that we do not possess. We follow this rule ourselves, in regard to others; and we may be assured that it is followed by others, in regard to us.—Do not, therefore, my brethren, degrade your nature, and your reason, by such foolish expectations. Do not, like the silly bird in the fable, plume yourselves with feathers, which are not your own; and look around you in expectation of applause, which will never be given to you. It is not he who seeks esteem, without deserving it, that will obtain it; but he who deserves esteem, and does not seek after it, that will meet with its favours.—Renounce, then, all these paltry pursuits. There are objects much more worthy of your ambition—objects, which will be of real service to you, and compared with which, the applause of men is less than nothing.

It was not without reason that the Great Creator instilled into the mind of man, an eager desire that his actions should be applauded, and that honour and esteem should be his portion. He intended thereby to stimulate him to

the performance of deeds that were worthy of admiration, and which would contribute, not merely to the gratification of pride, but to our real good, and to the good of others. For this purpose, he intended that we should make use of the reason that he gave to us, and impress on our minds the great truth, that salvation is our only business, and that the works, which will contribute to our salvation, are the only works that are worthy of esteem. He intended that we should reflect that it is He alone who can save: and He alone who can destroy: and that, despising alike the censures and applauses of men, we should seek his approbation alone, and dread his censures alone. These were his intentions: and had we corresponded with them in a due manner, they would have advanced us in the ways of virtue.

Consider this subject, my brethren, with attention, and examine what influence it has had on your past conduct, and how it is that you stand at the present time. If, upon a general review of your past lives, you may entertain a well-founded hope that you have done all your works with a pure intention, and that the approbation of heaven has been your principal desire, you may then indulge a pious pride; or, in other words, for even then the whole glory would be due to God alone, you may enjoy that interior consciousness of rectitude, which accompanies real virtue, and pour forth your souls in acts of thanksgiving to your great

Creator, who has enabled you to do such things for the honour and glory of his name, and for your own salvation.—But if, on the contrary, it appears but too clearly, that you have sought yourselves more than God, that you have seldom had the honour and glory of God before your eyes, and that, at the expense of conscience, you have run after earthly amusements, and perishable possessions, then have you reason to humble yourselves in the sight of your offended God, and with your eyes cast on the ground, like the publican, to exclaim : *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.* (Luke xviii.) And, were the Almighty to confer any special favour on you, before such time as you had brought forth worthy fruits of penance, you would have abundant reason to cry out, in the words of my text : *depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

The true Christian always proceeds in this manner. Look up to him as your model. He considers God as the witness of his actions. He looks up to him as his last end, as well as his first beginning: and he dreads nothing so much as his displeasure. The esteem, which he entertains of himself, is regulated by the degree of favour, which he conceives that he has merited in the sight of God; and the good opinion which he wishes that others should entertain of him, is regulated by the same criterion. He never compares himself with any of his fellow-creatures. Although vice may seem to reign

triumphant around him, he never judges himself to be more virtuous or more meritorious than any individual in the circle : and his reason is, because, not knowing what graces others have received, he knows not what graces they have abused. His eyes are fixed on God alone. His solicitude is concerning the treasure of wrath, which he fears that he has accumulated. His ambition is to be loved and cherished by him, who holds the book of life in his hand. His maxim is : " what I am in the sight of God, that I am, and no more."——Oh ! were we all guided by these sentiments, how effectually would human pride be banished from our minds ! how indifferent should we be, about the praise or censure of men ! how attentive should we be, to estimate our own faults and imperfections, and how ready to shut our eyes to those of others !

In fact, supposing it were true that we possessed superior qualities, either of body or mind, or had been more favoured with spiritual gifts than others, what reason should we have to pride ourselves on them ? *What hast thou, says St. Paul, which thou hast not received ; and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received ?* (1 Cor. iv.) All that we have, comes from God. And if he is more bountiful in any of his gifts to one than he is to another, he does not authorise him to glory therein, as if they were his own, nor to exalt himself above those who have received less. On

the contrary, he commands that all the glory be given to Him; and that the gifts be devoted to those purposes for which he gave them. Yes, my brethren, to all the gifts of God there is annexed an awful responsibility. Were you to receive ten talents from his hands, he would require ten other talents to be returned to him, when he calls you to account for your stewardship. Were he to entrust only two, he would require only other two. But, if he were to entrust to you only one, he will nevertheless expect a due return. Let your gifts, therefore, be what they may, either as to abundance, or quality, a corresponding responsibility is attached to them. Much will be required of him, to whom much is given; little, to whom little. But, from all a due employment of their talent will be required. And woe be to him, who hides his talent, or misemploys his talent, during the days of his mortality, and, when called to account, has no surplus to return.

Were we, indeed, only to consult the dictates of reason, when enlightened by the rays of the gospel, we could form no other conclusion. For, why does the Almighty bestow abundance of riches, or other special gifts on some, and refuse them to others? Not for their own individual profit or enjoyment alone, but for the benefit of the whole body at large. He expects that the rich should act as just stewards, and dispense their superabundance amongst those who are in need.. It is his will, that their su-

perfluities, like an overflowing stream, should refresh and fertilize the lowly plains, as far as its abundance suffices. To hoard up riches, to amass stores, and to shut up the bowels of compassion to the indigent, is to act in direct opposition to the will of the Lord and Master of all. And what reason can there be for pride, even in the most exalted, when he is acting in this manner? He is heaping up wrath, against the day of wrath: and, sooner or later, the judgments of God will fall upon him; the gold and silver, in which he placed his happiness, will be wrested out of his hands, perhaps to be squandered away by a profligate son, and his poor soul, naked and forlorn, will be placed before the tribunal of God, there to account for the last farthing that was at her disposal. Oh! how will she then exclaim, in the words of the Wise man: *what hath pride profited me? or what hath the boasting of riches brought me?* (Wisd. v.) —A more severe account, however, will be required of those, who have squandered away their property, and benefited neither their families nor the poor. Alas! if the mighty rich were to devote to the indigent, one half of what they lose in gambling, or waste in useless expenditure, how great would be their reward in heaven!

Considering these things, my brethren, may we not say, that there is more cause for humility than pride, in the possession of riches? It would be well for the rich man, to ponder at

leisure on the following sentences, extracted from holy writ : *What shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?—What will it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Matt. xvi.)—*It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. xix.) It would be well, I say, for the rich man to ponder at leisure on these sentences, and then, if he will reason justly with himself, he will say, that, in proportion to the riches entrusted to him, so much the more cause has he to humble himself, and to fear least, by an improper use of them, he *heap to himself wrath against the day of wrath.* (Rom. ii.)

In the same manner, when a person is gifted with great abilities, or extraordinary learning, religion teaches us, that there is much more cause for humility than pride. These talents are all given from above ; and they are given for the purpose of leading the possessor to the knowledge of all that is good, and enabling him to do much for the honour and glory of God, and the welfare of his fellow-creature. If they are made to answer these great purposes, they will profit him to life everlasting. But, if they are made to answer the purposes of vice, or, if they are made subservient only to his own private interest in this world, what can we say, but that he abuses the talents entrusted to him, and that, in proportion to the good which he might and ought to have done, so great is the

responsibility, and so severe will be the account demanded of him ? And can talents and learning be reasonable causes for pride, when they entail on the possessors such serious consequences ? Ah ! my brethren, be not puffed up with the vanity of the worldly wise : but rather humble yourselves, and be convinced, that the little you possess comes from God, and that, if you do not employ it for your salvation, it will contribute to your condemnation.

The same reflections are applicable to the spiritual gifts that are imparted to us. The gift of faith has many and great obligations annexed to it. The word of God, when imparted to you, either in private instructions or public exhortations, is expected to be productive, and have its due effect on your lives : or it will subject you to a severe responsibility. Now, these are gifts, which you have all received. The seed of God's word has been scattered over your souls in profusion, and what fruit has it produced ? Are you more moral, more upright, more religious than those of your brethren, to whom the light of faith, or the pure word of God, has never been imparted ? Remember, that you must give a severe account for every grace that you do not put to profit. And yet, how many are there, of a certain class in particular, among the lower order, who pride themselves on their faith, and vainly imagine that they alone are children of the inheritance ! —who look down with contempt and derision

on the deluded followers of error, and consider themselves far exalted above them even in the eyes of a just God! But, alas! that on which they pride themselves, ought to be a serious cause of humiliation. Much is given to them, and they return nothing. Had the same gifts been imparted to those, or at least to multitudes of those who are now in error, they would probably have become models of edification. *Wo to thee, Corozain and Bethsaide*, said our Lord to the Jews: *for if the things that have been done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes.* (Matt. xi.)

As for those, who sincerely endeavour to correspond with the graces of God, and whose consciences accuse them of no crime, may it not be allowable for them to indulge a certain self-complacency, and say that they are not like the rest of men? They ought to feel the most lively gratitude to God, for the distinguishing favours which he has imparted to them, and their hearts ought to burn with love for him, who has loved them first, and loved them gratuitously. But self-commendation is always dangerous. *Let him who boasts, says St. Paul, boast in the Lord: for, it is not he who praiseth himself, that is worthy of praise, but he who is approved of by the Lord.* (1 Cor. i.)

On the supposition, however, that we were not biassed by self-love, but that we led truly and sincerely the lives of saints, and walked

in all the commandments without reproof, yet, even then, no glory would be due to us, as if we had done any thing of ourselves. The whole glory would be due to God alone. St. Paul gloried in nothing but his infirmities. Notwithstanding the perfection of his virtues, he humbly acknowledged that it was the work of the grace of God alone : *by the grace of God, I am what I am.* (1 Cor. xv.) If, therefore, the grace of God be the cause of all our good, so far from indulging the feelings of self-complacency, we ought to humble ourselves at the sight of our insufficiency, and give the whole glory to him, to whom alone it is due.—Even when in the company of the wicked, we may find cause for humiliation. We may say to ourselves : “ if these wretched victims of error and vice had been favoured with the like graces that we have received, they would probably have entered into more sincere sentiments of repentance, would have more effectually conquered their passions, and would have advanced more rapidly in virtue than we have done.”

Humble yourselves, therefore, my brethren, at the feet of your great Lord and Master. Never compare yourselves with others, nor give the preference to yourselves, if you seem to possess more than others. Always reflect, that you have nothing of your own ; that all comes from God, and that, if talents, either of nature or grace, are entrusted to you, they will not contribute to your real welfare, unless you put

them to profit, and gain other talents. *God will have respect to no one but to him who is poor and little, and who trembleth at his words.* (Isa. lxvi.) Banish far from you the spirit of pride and vain-glory. Despise the applause and admiration of men. Listen not to the tales of self-approbation. Seek only the approbation of Him, who weighs all things in the scales of the sanctuary. Your Jesus has traced out the way, walking always in the lowly paths of meekness, and humility of heart. Follow the same track. The Almighty has declared, that *he will not give his glory to another.* (Isa. xlii.) Seek not to wrest it from him, by taking pride in his gifts, as if they were your own. Do this during the course of your mortal pilgrimage, and you may then confidently hope to be made partakers of his glory in the mansions of his happiness.

JUNE XXIX.

ON SS. PETER AND PAUL.

Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world.....ROM. x. 18.

THESE words of my text are taken by the inspired apostle, from the fifth verse of the 18th Psalm, for the purpose of describing the wonderful efficacy of the word of God, and the indefatigable and successful labours of those, who were selected by the Messias, for the important work of promulgating the new law : *their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world.*—Their heavenly Master and Teacher, a few moments before his final departure from them, declared, that they should be *witnesses to him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth.* (Acts i. 8.) And the application of this verse of the Psalmist to their labours, proves that, in the space of a few years, they had faithfully, and literally fulfilled the com-

mission.—But, my brethren, what a commission ! It is a subject worthy of your consideration, to weigh well the magnitude of the undertaking,—the seeming inability of the men who were appointed to execute it,—and the ways, by which the desired success was obtained. These subjects will convince you that no other than the finger of God operated these wonders, and consequently, that the Gospel is the truth of God, and entitled to your fullest confidence.

In these times, when the doctrines of Christianity are peaceably established, and the generality of men are firmly convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the doctrines of Jesus are the doctrines of Truth itself, it is impossible to form a competent idea of the difficulties, which were to be surmounted, in order to plant the Cross on the ruins of idolatry, and to bring the world to the belief of mysteries, which they could not comprehend. In these times a reformation of morals, or a removal of prejudices, is all that the preacher has in view, when he delivers the word of God. But in those times, men were idolaters. They knew not even the true God. Their religion was gross and carnal, and their immoralities were sanctioned by the examples of the false Gods whom they adored. The Jews were the only people acquainted with the nature of the true God ; and even these, so far from being favourable to the great work, were a proud, stiff-necked race, and obstinate.

ly attached to the observances of their law, in opposition to the law of the gospel. In a word, the Jesus, whose divinity and doctrines they were to preach, was *a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the gentile.* (1 Cor. i. 23.)

Ah! if twelve individuals amongst you, we will say, twelve of the most accomplished, and consequential, were sent out with a commission to work a perfect change in the minds of men, to bring them to the belief of mysteries, the most incomprehensible, and to the practice of duties the most repugnant to the feelings, which they had always been accustomed to indulge, how uncertain, how difficult, how impossible would the task appear in your eyes! You know what difficulty there is in reclaiming one sinner from the error of his ways. You know what difficulty there is in subduing your own passions, convinced, as you are, that the salvation of your souls depends upon it. How then would you be able to reclaim the world from error, to spread the light of truth over the earth, to beat down the standard of infidelity, and to erect the standard of the Cross on the ruins of all the passions, which were the dearest to the heart of man! This, nevertheless, was the task imposed upon the apostles: and the success of their labours, may be called one of the most incontestible proofs of the divinity of their mission.

In the first place, who were these apostles? They were not men endowed with earthly

wisdom, power, grandeur, cunning, and political deception. They were poor and illiterate fishermen;—as poor and as illiterate, as the poorest and the most ignorant that are to be found amongst you.—They were not men of undaunted courage and perseverance; they were timid, weak, and irresolute, as is testified by their conduct during our Saviour's passion. They were, in fact, worldly minded; they were looking up for temporal honours and glory, little thinking what it was that they were to suffer, and what the task was they were to execute, till the very moment, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them, and they were to commence the work.—In what manner were they to proceed, in order to ensure success? According to the ideas of the world, power, and wealth, and wisdom, and eloquence, were indispensably requisite; but of these, they had none. For, what power or influence could there be in twelve poor fishermen? what wealth could they possess, who had left their little all, namely, their *nets*, to follow Christ? what eloquence, or wisdom, could be expected in men, who were in the lowest walks of life, and whose means of information were confined within the narrowest limits? No: it was not by means such as these, that the gospel was to be propagated. It was to be the work of heaven: and the Almighty would not appear to be indebted for its completion, in any manner, to the wisdom or power of man *He chose the foolish*

things of the world, that he might confound the strong ; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not, hath he chosen, that he might bring to nought the things that are : that no flesh should glory in his sight. (1 Cor. i. 25.) It was to be his own work. *There were not, as St. Paul says, (ibid.) many wise according to the word, not many mighty, not many noble. They were poor and illiterate : and poor and illiterate they went forth, armed only with the power of God, and the wisdom of God. They preached, but it was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and power, that the faith of their converts might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. (1 Cor. ii.) They seemed not to know any thing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified : and they were, in the midst of their disciples, in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (ibid.) They were set forth the last, as it were men appointed to death : they were made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. They were fools for Christ's sake : they were weak, and without honour : they suffered hunger and thirst : they were naked, and were buffeted, and had no fixed abode : they laboured with their own hands : when they were reviled, they returned blessings : when they were persecuted, they patiently and silently endured it : when they were ill spoken of, they entreated. In a word, they were made as the refuse of this world, the off-scouring of all.*

(1 Cor. iv.) These were the abilities, this was the state, of the great *renovators of the world*, as described by St. Paul himself.

Contemptible, however, as they were, according to the world, they commenced the arduous task with intrepidity, *the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.* (Mark xvi.) They preached, and *the multitudes were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue, and they were amazed, and wondered, saying: Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans, and how have we heard, every man our own tongue in which we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites. . . . Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.* (Acts ii.) By their ministry, the Lord restored sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, strength to the lame, and health to the diseased. At their word, he expelled the devils from the bodies of the possessed, and constrained them to acknowledge the truth of the Gospel, and the divinity of Jesus.—Strengthened by such extraordinary powers, and confirmed by such supernatural works, their words were attended to; and the interior grace of God working in the souls of their hearers, the number of their converts rapidly encreased. Thousands, and tens of thousands, amongst whom were priests and doctors, and scribes, and pharisees, joined themselves to the society of these poor fisher-

men. Persecutions were set on foot by the enraged high-priest and sanhedrim; but the power of God upheld them. They patiently endured scourges, imprisonments, and ignominies of various kinds, and even *rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproaches for the name of Jesus.* (Acts v.) The attempts of the devils, and of the rulers of this world of darkness, to withstand their progress were unavailing; or rather, the very means, which they employed to destroy the efficacy of their word, were made, by the hand of God, the means of propagating the gospel more and more. They caused the Apostles to be scourged, and by their patience and joy under the torment, they induced many to embrace the faith. They put St. Stephen and others to death, and their blood was seed, from which multitudes of Christians sprang up. They banished the Apostles from their territories, and their separation caused them to carry the light of faith to the most distant nations, and to collect into the fold multitudes from the east and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

Thus, in spite of every obstacle, and every opposition, they succeeded in their great enterprise; and in the space of a few years, *their sound went forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world.* (Rom. x.)

—Oh! truly may it be said, that the finger of God was here, and that none but Omnipo-

tent power could operate such a change in the minds of men !

I do not deny that revolutions have sometimes taken place in the minds and opinions of men, and that they may be attributed to human causes. But never was there a revolution, of such universal extent, brought about by such inefficient means, or that was in such total opposition to the cravings of nature, or to the then existing disposition of the minds of men. It mattered not to what nation the multitudes belonged, whether to the civilized metropolis of the world, or to the tribes, who wandered about in tents and waggons without any fixed abode ;—it mattered not to what vices they had been previously habituated, or however gross and carnal their religious ideas had hitherto been ; no sooner were they added to the fold, than they became animated with the true spirit of piety, despisers of all momentary earthly pleasures, with their hearts centered in heaven, longing only after the possession of the eternal abodes of Sion. The proud and haughty, instantly became patterns of humility. The passionate and revengeful became meek. The libidinous became chaste. The glutton and the drunkard became models of temperance, and reduced their bodies into subjection by the austerities of fasting and penance. The obstinate and self-willed imbibed the spirit of obedience and submission. The profane swearer and the liar renounced their former habits, and,

with the calumniator and detractor, made a covenant with their lips, never to speak a word to the dishonour of God, or to the injury of their neighbour. The thoughtless, the gay, the debauched worldling, became sober, retired, and solicitous for the honour and glory of God. The avaricious opened his bowels to the feelings of compassion, and dealt out his unnecessary treasures to the needy. The prodigal restrained his squandering hand, and carefully stored his superfluities for his indigent brethren. The poor blessed God in the midst of their privations, and submitted cheerfully to his will: and the rich descended from that haughty eminence, on which they had been hitherto seated, placed themselves on a level with the poor, and embraced them as their brethren, and fellow-members in Jesus Christ. —In a word, the whole collective multitude of the faithful, scattered over all the nations of the earth, and hitherto separated from each other, by difference of climes, and governments, and interests, became united together in one common band of union, forming, as it were, but one body, and possessing, as it were, but one heart and one mind:—their understandings all submissive, and united in the belief of mysteries which surpassed their comprehension:—their wills reduced into subjection, and into the obedience of the gospel:—their whole souls burning with the love of God:—and their whole selves ready to suffer igno-

minies, torments, and death itself, in defence of these new principles, which they had been induced to embrace.

In all this, my brethren, we can see nothing but the finger of God. It was impossible for man to bring about such a change. It was the handy work of God alone, and were this the only proof of the divinity of the christian religion, it would be sufficient to bring conviction to the mind of every sincere investigator of human events. Many wonderful convulsions, I allow, have taken place in the human mind, from time to time, in different nations: and time has demonstrated, that enthusiasm and human feelings have been their parent: but it is now eighteen hundred years since the establishment of Christianity, (a time more than sufficiently long for the heats of imagination to cool, and for imposition to be detected,) and yet, the majority of the world is still christian, and by far the greater majority of christians are Catholics, united together in the same bonds of union, the same sacraments, the same sacrifice,—are members of the same Catholic Church, which existed from the beginning, and, in all probability, immense multitudes are even now ready to lay down their lives in defence of it.

On account of the pride and perversity of human nature, it is nothing extraordinary that in all ages restless spirits should have been found, who would follow their own devices and

imaginations, and, refusing to submit their understandings to the obedience of faith, should renounce the *sacred deposit once delivered to the saints*, (Jude i.) and become *separatists*, or *heretics*: for, as St. Paul says, *there must be heresies, that they who are approved, may be made manifest among you*. (1 Cor. xi.)—Nor is it wonderful that, in the latter times, there should be men who preach up absolute *infidelity*, and endeavour to propagate the disbelief of all revealed religion whatever. The same Jesus, who sent down the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth, on the first establishment of Christianity, foretold that such men should come in these latter times, and that they should so far prevail in their impious labours, that, before the final dissolution of the world, faith should hardly be found upon earth. (*Luke xviii.*)

These occurrences, however, do not invalidate the proof that the establishment of christianity over the world, is one of the most wonderful works of God, and one of the strongest motives of credibility, for the belief of the mysteries of the religion which you profess. They only prove that the nature of man is even now depraved, and that his depravity may lead him to the same incredulity and spiritual blindness in these times, as it did the former race of mankind before the deluge, and after the confusion of Babel.

In the prosecution of this great work of the conversion of the world, the two apostles, whose

festival we celebrate on this day, were the most conspicuous instruments. St. Peter, after having wrought the greatest wonders, and brought innumerable multitudes to the faith, in Jerusalem and Judea, and after having founded the flourishing Church of Antioch, travelled to Rome, the great metropolis of the world, and there fixed his principal residence. It was fitting, that he, who was chosen to be the Rock, on which the Church was to be built, (*Matt.* xvii.) to whom were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with unlimited power of binding and losing, (*Ibid.*) and to whom was committed the charge of superintending both the lambs and the sheep, that is, the whole flock of Christ, (*John* xxi.) should be fixed in the most conspicuous part of the world. At Rome, therefore, he established his See; and, after having suffered a variety of persecutions, endured incredible labours, and converted numberless souls to Christ, during the space of twenty-five years, he sealed his doctrine with his blood, under the Pagan Emperor Nero. He was crucified, like his beloved Master, but, at his own request, with his head downwards, thinking himself unworthy to die in the same posture, in which his Lord had died for him.

St. Paul was converted to the faith, after the descent of the Holy Ghost. From a fiery zealot, and persecutor of the Church, he was changed in an instant, by the power of Jesus,

into a fervent disciple, and indefatigable preacher of the gospel. So ardent was his zeal, so wonderful were the works performed by his ministry, and so innumerable the souls converted by his labours, that he is styled by excellence, the Apostle and the Doctor of the Gentiles. To enumerate his labours, to rehearse his sufferings, to describe his excellencies, is unnecessary on this occasion. They are recorded by the Spirit of God in the inspired writings. Suffice it to say, that he founded many Churches in various parts of the world, and that, after he had laboured many years, he sealed his doctrine with his blood, at Rome, under the same Emperor Nero, and on the same day, although probably not the same year, as the illustrious Prince of the Apostles.

To these two apostles we may say that we, in these countries, are chiefly indebted, under Christ, for the knowledge of the mysteries of salvation. The Church has set apart this day, as a day of thanksgiving to God for the blessings, which have been imparted to us through their ministry.—Enter, therefore, into the spirit of the Church, and return your humble thanks to God. But, in a particular manner consider that, if the Almighty has wrought such wonders for the propagation of the gospel, on purpose to provide you with the means of salvation, and that, if the apostles have endured such labours, and have suffered such torments for the same purpose, much likewise

is required to be done by you. The narrow path, which leads to life, is pointed out to you, and the power of entering it is given you : but the thorns and briars, with which it is beset, are not removed. You must be earnest and persevering. You must labour to put to profit the treasures that have been provided for you. You must suffer, and suffer patiently in the cause of justice and holiness, before you will be put in possession of your crown.

Be attentive, therefore, to the practice of Christian virtues. Be zealous in the cause of God and your souls. Imitate the fervour of the primitive Christians. Follow the lessons of Christian morality, which the apostles have recorded for your instruction. Persevere to the end in your labours ; and the same rewards, which have already been conferred on the apostles, and on all the other faithful servants of Christ, will, in due time, be conferred likewise on you.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE PERFECTION WHICH EVERY CHRISTIAN
OUGHT TO ATTAIN.

*Except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees,
you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. MATT. v. 20.*

It is with trembling, my brethren, that I call your attention to the words of our Saviour, which I have selected for my text. They are words of terror and dismay. They give us to understand the high state of perfection to which every Christian is bound to attain, in order to save his soul. And, when the morals of Christians in general are considered, they but too plainly indicate, that the number of those who save their souls, is very small indeed: *except your justice*, or in other words, your virtue and piety, *exceed that of the Scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Now, what were *the Scribes and Pharisees*? What was their *justice*? These are questions, on which the whole weight of the subject de-

pends.—The Scribes, among the Jews, were learned men, whose office it was to study the laws of Moses, as contained in the Bible, and to expound them to the people.—The Pharisees were a certain sect, or society, who aimed at extraordinary perfection, and professed to follow the law in its utmost rigour. Both these descriptions of people were much revered by the Jews, and considered as models of virtue and piety. They publicly expressed the greatest abhorrence of sin and of sinners. They seemed to have the honour and glory of God truly at heart. They would not so much as eat with a man, who was notoriously guilty of a breach of the divine commands. They made it a subject of reproach to our Blessed Saviour, that he eat with publicans and sinners. Their zeal was inflamed against the woman, who was discovered in the act of adultery. They would have stoned her to death, as the laws of Moses directed ; and they only deferred the execution of their intentions, till they had brought her to our Saviour, to see whether he, as the friend of sinners, would endeavour to exculpate her.—They regularly attended the temple of God, at the hours of prayer and sacrifice ; and this, not on the sabbaths only, but on all other days.—They were constant in prayer, not only at the stated times of morning, noon, and night, but they prayed as they walked the streets, and probably at their occupations.—They gave alms, and abundant alms.—They scrupulously

attended to all the observances of the law, and had the commandments written on their garments, in order to have them always before their eyes.—They condemned the proceedings of their forefathers, who persecuted the prophets, and just men, and put them to death.—They held in due estimation the Priests and Levites, whom God had appointed to be their teachers.—They fasted, and scrupulously paid the tithe, not by compulsion, but joyfully, of every, even the most insignificant, produce which they possessed.—These are qualities, which our Lord himself acknowledges in the Scribes and Pharisees; and yet He declares that, *unless our justice exceed theirs, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

The sentence is truly alarming; and it behoves us to examine in what they were deficient, and to calculate the difference that there is between them and us, between the sincerity of their religious piety and ours.

In the first place, our Saviour does not accuse them of any vicious habit, or excess. He does not lay to their charge the crimes of drunkenness, swearing, debauchery, lust, dissoluteness, or lying. He does not reckon among the number of their sins, hatred, animosity, revenge, calumny, detraction, or a want of brotherly love. He does not accuse them of any essential deficiency in their love for God, nor of any notorious transgression of any of his commandments, nor of a want of

zeal for the sanctification of their souls.—The amount of the crimes alledged against them is, that they indulged the spirit of pride and vain-glory, and that they scrupulously attended to the *letter* of the law, on the supposition that nothing more was required at their hands; in consequence of which, they neglected the *spirit* of the law, on which, the law and the gospel itself depend.—These were their faults. These were the crimes, which were to exclude them for ever from the kingdom of heaven.

Now, my brethren, look seriously into yourselves, and examine, whether or not, your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees? The justice, that is, the piety and religion of the greater number of Christians, does not seem even to equal what was witnessed in this censured people. How is it, my brethren, with you? It will be well for you to enter into an examination on this subject; for what will become of you, if it be discovered that your justice does not even equal that of the Scribes and Pharisees? Are you, therefore, addicted to drunkenness, or profane swearing? to debauchery, or excess of dissipation—to the passion of lust, or of anger? Are you deceitful in your dealings, or seek you your own interest by acts of injustice?—does hatred, animosity, or the desire of revenge against any one of your fellow-creatures, rankle in your breasts?—Do you cherish that perpetual itching for

defamation and scandal, which is so generally felt by the children of men?—If your conscience accuse you of these, or of any other vice, which was not laid to the charge of the Scribes and Pharisees, you must necessarily conclude that your justice is inferior to theirs, and that you will with greater reason be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, than what they were. This point, my brethren, is not to be passed over slightly. The words of my text, are the words of Truth itself, and they will be fulfilled to a tittle: *except your justice EXCEED that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

There is reason, however, to hope that there are many, and a great many amongst you, that are not addicted to any flagrant violation of the laws of God ; to these, therefore, we will turn our attention, and examine whether their justice *is equal*, at least, to that of the Scribes and Pharisees. These men, not only preserved their own souls undefiled by inordinate excesses, but they felt a hatred for sin in others, and discouraged it by every means in their power. Can you say, that your hatred of sin is the same? Are you grieved when you see the Lord of Glory offended and insulted by your brethren, as much as they seemed to be grieved? Is it not rather too often the case, that you witness sins in others, without the least emotion of indignation? and that you can look on, or listen to what is criminal, with a spirit of

apathy and indifference? May it not, likewise, be said, that many of you make little scruple of conscience of enticing others to offend God, by encouraging drinking, or quarrelling, by fanning the flames of dissension and animosity, or by applauding actions, which you ought to condemn?

In the second place, the Scribes and Pharisees showed forth a zeal for the honour and glory of God. Examine yourselves, as to a similarity with them in this respect. Can you give testimony that, in the most important trust committed to you, namely, the management of your own family concerns, you consult the honour and glory of God, and oppose every thing that is contrary to it, both in your children and in your servants? Can you say that you endeavour, both by word and example, to convince your children, that they are sent into this world for no other purpose than to save their souls? Can you say that your instructions to them have been always directed to this point, that you have watched over their morals with the greatest care, and that you have not excused their failings, merely to save your own feelings? These things ought to be examined into: for, how often is it that we witness in parents a foolish fondness, which will not suffer them to see any fault in their children? How often is it, that the example of parents is calculated to instil into the minds of their offspring, a zeal only for this world—a love of

money—an earnest solicitude for the perishable possessions of this world? And when we witness this in parents, what can we say of the parents themselves? No other, than that they make these things the only objects of their ambition, that their affections are fixed on the world, and on the indulgence of their misplaced affections; and that the honour and glory of God, and the eternal welfare of their offspring, or of those, who are under their charge, has little influence on their minds. And can these people say, that their justice is equal to that of the Scribes and Pharisees?

It appears, likewise, that the Scribes and Pharisees were assiduous in prayer, and regular in their attendance at the public service of God in his temple, not only on the sabbath, but at the usual morning and evening sacrifices on other days.—Is your justice equal to theirs in this respect? Alas! may it not be said of many of you, that you consider that every duty, which you owe to God, is fulfilled by saying a few prayers at morning and night, and attending to Mass on the Sundays and holidays? As Christians, my brethren, we ought frequently, during the day, to collect our wandering thoughts, to retire for a few moments, now and then, from the hurry of business, and to think of our God in private meditation. We ought, in the midst of our occupations, to raise up our hearts frequently to heaven, and offer up a

short prayer to the God who made us. When wearied and tired with our earthly pursuits, and when crossed and perplexed by losses and disappointments, we ought to turn our thoughts to a better world, and express our ardent longings after those eternal good things, which will never be taken from us. This is our duty as Christians. But how many are there amongst us, who go on in the same beaten path, which is followed by the world, thinking of little but their worldly business, and confining their commerce with God to the few minutes, which they allot to their usual prayers, at the beginning and close of the day. If this be your case, my brethren, how inferior, in this respect, is your justice to that of the Scribes and Pharisees!

The Scribes and Pharisees were, likewise, scrupulously exact in discharging the obligations which they owed to the ministers of God, according to the ordinances of the law: they regularly paid the tithe of every thing they possessed. Do you equal them in this respect? On this subject, however, it is not for me to enlarge, lest it should be construed into an attempt to preach up my own interest. No: this I shall leave entirely to your own consideration. It is not your goods, nor your possessions, that the Christian Pastor labours for, or desires. It is your souls, and your souls alone. It would be our greatest joy, were we exempted from the common necessities of man-

kind, or that we could exist, without adding to the burden of those who are already overburdened, and who are as dear to us as our own souls. But it has not pleased the Almighty to distinguish us in this manner. It is his ordinance, that the flock should depend on the Pastor for spiritual food, and that the flock, in return, should provide him with all things necessary for his temporal subsistence.—It is the duty, therefore, of every Christian, if he has means, to contribute to the support of the Pastor, whom God has placed over him. But, as I said before, I shall leave it entirely to your own reflections, to ascertain whether or not you are as exact in this duty as were the Scribes and Pharisees.

Perhaps, however, it will be said, that the virtues and good works of the Scribes and Pharisees, were vitiated by pride and vain-glory; and that they did their works, as the scripture says, that they might be seen by men. It is not my wish, nor my intention, to call this in question. It would be unworthy of a Christian preacher, to describe unfairly any character which is given in the scriptures, or to add to the severity of the gospel maxims. I acknowledge, therefore, that their good works were done chiefly to attract the applause of men, and that pride and vain-glory corrupted their virtues, and deprived them of merit in the sight of God. But are not your virtues

and good works frequently vitiated in the same manner? You probably do not make long prayers, or pray publicly in the streets, merely that you might be seen by men. But may it not be said, that the reason is, because such exercises are not held in high estimation in these times, and will not attract the applause of men? Perhaps it may be found on examination, that many of you would be ashamed to be seen praying as you walked along the streets, or discovered at your private devotions at home. And may we not fairly argue from this, that the opinion of men has great weight with you, and that, if the ridicule of men would operate upon you so strongly, as to cause you to be ashamed at being discovered at prayer out of the usual time, the applause of men, if men applauded such things, would induce you to wish to be seen by them when you prayed, and sometimes induce you to pray, for that express purpose?

However, without insisting on this point, may it not be said, that pride and vain-glory are frequently inducements to you to perform the good works, which you know are esteemed by men? How many are there, who are stimulated to acts of charity, chiefly by this motive? How often is it, that you yourselves secretly wish, that your amiable qualities,—your meekness, your patience, your evenness of temper, your abilities, &c. should be known and esteemed by men. And when this is not the case, may it not be said that you take pride in your-

selves, and in your own esteem, prefer yourselves before others, who do not seem to possess this or that quality in an equal degree? As for the vanity of dress, the love of the first places at feasts, and the first chairs in the synagogues, and salutations, and such like, (crimes alledged against the Scribes and Pharisees) they appear to be as common amongst Christians, as they were amongst them.

But let us examine into this pride of the Scribes and Pharisees, and see whether its criminality be so great, as it is generally supposed to be. In the first place, it is not said, nor is it insinuated in the gospel, that pride was their only, or their primary inducement to good works. On the contrary, it is clear, that they had the intention of pleasing God, and that they considered that they were pleasing God. This is manifest from the words of thanksgiving, which they made to God, for the distinguishing favours, which they supposed that they had received from him : *Lord, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.* (Luke xviii.)

Again, the nature of spiritual pride was not so precisely defined, nor so severely condemned in the old law, as it is in the new. I will not say that it was less hateful in the sight of God, than it is now. But it was not so well known, nor was its criminality so clearly explained by the expounders of the law. The Pharisees themselves, in all probability, did

not think that they were acting in any manner contrary to the will of their divine Lawgiver. Their crime and misfortune was, that they would not give ear to their great Master, who reproved them for their errors, because they considered themselves above reproof. In other respects, they seem to have led moral lives. The whole nation of the Jews approved, and admired their conduct. They were the holy ones of Israel; and they looked up to heaven, likewise, for approbation. By fulfilling the letter, they conceived that they fulfilled the whole law: at least, there is nothing in scripture to prove the contrary.

But, my brethren, can the same be said of you? You are well acquainted with the nature of pride; you know the duties of a christian life, and you know that the whole is to be fulfilled, not merely to the letter, nor with the view of obtaining the esteem and applause of men, but with the sole view of pleasing God, and saving your souls. Now, can it be said that you fulfil your duty in this respect, and fulfil it as you ought? If so, your justice exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. But if, with the knowledge you possess, you do not fulfil all your duties, or fulfil them with the intention of gratifying pride and vain-glory, your justice is far inferior to theirs, and your sentence will be proportionably severe. They sinned, I may almost say, without knowledge; you sin with full knowledge and deliberation.

They thought that they were truly pious, and in some degree, perfect in the ways of God. You know that you are far otherwise, that there are many things reprehensible in your conduct, and that you are far from the state of perfection, to which you ought to attain. For them, therefore, some excuse, although not an available one, may be brought forward. For you, none.

These, my brethren, are alarming truths. They are truths, delivered by Truth itself in the plainest terms. They are truths, which cannot be mistaken, by any sincere lovers of the truth, and they are truths, which cannot be seriously considered by Christians, who are disposed to hear the truth, without trembling. Make them the subject of your consideration. The words are : *except your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Ponder on them at leisure. They will make a deep impression on your minds. And if salvation be the principal desire of your hearts, they will be a constant inducement to you to labour to fulfil all the duties of a Christian life, with that perfection, which will entitle you to a recompense hereafter, at the hands of a just Judge, who *will render to every man according to his works.* (Rom. 2.)

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR TEMPORAL
BLESSINGS.

I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.

MARK viii. 2.

IN this gospel, my brethren, our Lord exhibits the paternal tenderness with which he attends to the corporal wants of his creatures, during their abode in this mortal life: *behold they have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat.* He not only feeds them with bread from heaven—the word of life:—he not only instructs them in the way of salvation, and imparts to them the secrets of his heavenly doctrine:—he not only proves himself to be the father and feeder of their souls, but he shows himself to be solicitous for their temporal well-being, and by the wonderful miracle which he wrought on this occasion, he proves himself to be the great Giver of all

those things, on which they are to subsist during the time of their mortal pilgrimage.

This is the lesson which is conveyed to us in the gospel of this Sunday. It is from God that we have received all that we possess, and it is to God that we are to look up for every thing that we hope to possess hereafter. His tenderness and love for us, are greater than what are felt by the tenderest parent, and his bounty will be great, in proportion to our necessities. This is the goodness which God exhibits towards us. We are bound, on our parts, to make him a return of sincere heartfelt gratitude, and consider him as the great Author and Giver of all. A few reflections on this subject, will not be unworthy of your attention.

Were we to enter into an examination of the ways and manners of men, and to form our judgment from what we witnessed in them, we should conclude, that they did not believe there was an over-ruling Providence ; but that every one was left to himself, to provide as well as he could for his corporal subsistence : we should conclude, that they considered the productions of the earth as the mere workings of nature, unassisted by a superior power, or that the Creator was necessitated as it were, to bring them forward in due season ; and, we should conclude, that they had no other hope of succeeding in trade or business, than what arose from their own individual exertions, or from casual circumstances. These would be our

conclusions, were we to judge of the opinions of men, by their manner of acting.

But, we are not to look to the ways of men for our guidance in questions of this kind. Religion is to be our rule, and our ways and manners ought to be influenced solely by its dictates. By religion, therefore, we learn that there is a Providence that watches over every individual; that the future prospects of every one of us depend on his dispensations; that we have all received our existence and all other things from him, and that his paternal care attends, feeds, clothes, and supports us in every stage, and in every path of life. However forlorn or wretched any individual may appear in the eyes of men, religion informs us that he is an object of the solicitude, and is under the immediate care of the Most High; that he is in his hands; that he is supported by him; that he shares in his love;—and that nothing happens to him, without his pleasure or permission. However abject his poverty, or however numerous his afflictions or privations, religion informs us, that these are all the dispensations of a merciful God, who, whether he lift up or cast down, has no other object in view, than the sanctification of the soul of each and every one of his beloved creatures, without exception of person. —In consequence of this information, we know that, however opulent a man may be, however extensive his possessions, however

great his authority, however numerous his titles, he derives all from the hand of God, who alone is the giver of every gift. From the same source we know that the most exalted are as dependant on God, and as much obliged to acknowledge their subjection to him, as the lowest of the human species :—that the greatest monarch is not more beloved, nor more regarded, by God, than the meanest subject : that more spiritual gifts and graces (independently of those which are required for the discharge of the special duties of his state) are not given to him, nor more efficient means of saving his soul provided for him, than for the last member of the Christian body. From the same source we know, that it is God who exalts, and that it is God who humbles : that the humbled are as acceptable in his sight as the exalted ; and that the only quality, which merits and receives distinction from him, is true piety. Job was once the richest of men, and he was pleasing to God, and distinguished by him, not on account of his immense possessions, but on account of his piety. In one day he was deprived, by the permission of God, of all his riches, reduced to the greatest poverty, changed into a most disgusting spectacle, by running sores and ulcers, and seated on a dunghill. And yet he was pleasing to God, and distinguished by him, not merely on account of his afflictions, but on account of his piety, and his patient acknowledgment of the

power and authority of God.—In the same manner, my brethren, in whatever state we may be, we are all in the hands of God ; the same care and paternal tenderness is extended to every one ; and there is no distinction in his sight, except what is caused by religion and piety. The dignity and splendor, to which some are raised, is not a criterion by which we are to judge of their favour with God ; nor is poverty a mark of his displeasure and aversion. But, as these distinctions are necessary for the well-being of society in the world, some are appointed to one state, and some to another ; and all are equally well-pleasing to him, who has so ordained that they should be. The whole Christian world forms one body, as it were, in his sight, composed of many members. The feet have no reason to complain : “ Why am I not the head ? ” nor the hands : “ Why am I not the belly ? ” They all have their places allotted to them by God : and it is by fulfilling the duties belonging to their state, that they are to make themselves acceptable in their Maker, and thus grow up in him who is their head, even Christ : from whom *the whole body, compacted, and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh encrease of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity.*—(Eph. iv.)

This, my brethren, is the information, which religion imparts to us. But, how little advan-

tage is derived from it by Christians in general! Where shall we find a person who is perfectly satisfied, at all times, in the state in which he is? Who is there that duly reflects upon the duties, which his particular state imposes on him, and endeavours to fulfil them? Who is uniformly regular in returning thanks to God for the little, or much, that he possesses? If a person be born, or reduced to poverty, it is, that he might save his soul through the medium of poverty. In this sense, poverty is a blessing, and who is there amongst the poor, who cheerfully submits to it, and returns thanks to God for it, merely on that account?—If a man be born, or rise to opulence, and rank, it is, that he might save his soul by the proper use of these things. In this sense alone, riches are a blessing; and who is there among the wealthy, who returns thanks for his possessions, merely on this account? If a Christian be afflicted with pains, losses, and contradictions, it is, that he might save his soul by patience and submission. In this sense, they are blessings, and who is there that returns thanks to God, for imposing them on him?—Alas! the number of those who place the evils, or the good things of the world in this point of view, is very small: and the number, who accept them from the hand of God, in this sense, is much smaller. Almost all seem to act as if chance had the regulation of these things, or as if they ~~they~~ had no reference whatever to

the salvation of their souls. The poor repine at their hard lot, as they call it, and sometimes murmur against the providence of God, as if they had experienced an injustice at his hands. The afflicted and oppressed indulge impatience, complain of their sufferings, and sometimes think that they are chastised more than they deserve. The rich attribute to themselves a certain kind of merit, on account of their possessions. They look up to their grand houses and plantations; they parade about in their fine equipages; they assume an air of dignity and importance, and look around for admiration and respect. In this manner they pride themselves on their riches, instead of employing them, with thanks to God, in promoting their salvation.

Thus it is, my brethren, that few are to be found, who make the evils or the goods of this life contribute to the great end for which they were intended. We frequently, indeed, hear people say, "thank God," when they receive any temporal blessing: but even on these occasions, their gratitude is excited, not because that blessing will contribute to their salvation, but because it is agreeable in a worldly point of view, and is calculated to promote their advancement in the world, or gratify their sensual appetite.

The deficiency, however, which is most generally witnessed, is a want of gratitude to God for the fruits of the earth. Many, I allow,

are regular in their acts of thanksgiving for what Providence is pleased to provide for them. But how great is the number of those, who seem to have no greater sense of gratitude for these blessings, than the very beasts of the field? Of the men, whose labours are devoted to the cultivation of the land, how many are there who sow, witness the encrease, and reap their harvest, without once thinking of the creative hand that produced it! How many, who behold the blessings of God in the encrease of their herds and flocks, and never think seriously of returning thanks to their bountiful Benefactor! We may go farther, and say, how many are there who, instead of returning thanks, are continually insulting the tender parent, who so kindly and liberally provides for their temporal welfare! How many, who, surrounded on all sides, by testimonies of his love, who, in the very act of applying to him for his mercies, when they till the ground, and in the very act of receiving his gifts, when they carry home their sheaves, lift up their hands insultingly against him, and by their oaths, and curses, and impatience, and lewdness, both in thought, word, and deed, render themselves fit objects of his severest judgments! How often, my brethren, are men of this description to be found? And what is it that restrains the arm of the Almighty? What is it that induces him to correspond with the labours of these worthless wretches, and to give them

an encrease of their stores? What is it that induces him to rain upon the unjust, as well as the just? Is it out of particular love for them? Certainly not. Is it in hopes that his forbearance and tender mercies will work upon their minds, and bring them to a due sense of their duties? This is one great reason. But the principal reason is, his love and tenderness for his faithful servants. Were he to inflict his judgments on the wicked husbandmen, and refuse to give them an encrease, what would become of the world? Were he to refuse to rain upon the unjust, how should we be supplied with food? Yes, it is principally out of tenderness and love for his faithful servants, that his arm is restrained, and that he seems to favour his enemies, at the time that they are insulting him by their crimes. It is for the sake of the good grain, that he suffers the cockle to flourish for a time.

These are truths, my brethren, which it behoves you to ponder seriously and frequently. They will convince you, that the blessings of meat and clothing, whether they be scanty or abundant, call for a return of gratitude and love. Your God has probably suffered to go unpunished, for a time, many an insult, in order to provide them for you. Yes, we may say with truth, that even the God of infinite and eternal majesty has submitted to the grossest insults, and has borne with patience the most unmerited and the most malicious pro-

vocations, merely that you should not be deprived of what is necessary for your temporal subsistence. Every morsel of food that you take, every garment that you wear, has perhaps been unhallowed by a curse, or some other crime; and God has permitted it, as it were in silence, for your sake.—Oh! let a due sense of the mercies of God be henceforward impressed on your minds. Receive every temporal blessing from his hand with the deepest gratitude. At your meals, think of the mercies of God, and of the insults he probably endured in providing them for you. When you put on your clothes, or when you are provided with new ones, think of the same. When you are tempted to commit excess, either in eating or drinking, or when you are tempted to take pride in your clothing, think of this, and shudder at the idea of abusing gifts, which have been purchased for you at so dear a rate. If it be little that the Lord provides for you in your poverty, receive that little with content and gratitude. Be not diffident of his mercies. Only serve him with fidelity and love, and he will always provide for you what is necessary. He wrought a miracle, as is recorded in this day's gospel, in order to feed the multitudes who had been attending on him, and listening to his heavenly doctrine: and will he not provide for you, as long as you are faithful and dutiful to him?—If it be much that the Lord is pleased to put into your hands, receive it

with thanksgiving : and after having applied to your own wants what nature, or the rank you hold in life, requires, be the ministers of his mercies, and run to the relief of your afflicted fellow-creatures.—Gratitude is a most amiable virtue : ingratitude, a most detestable vice. Banish the latter entirely from your breasts, and open every avenue of your souls to admit the former. Consider not, that gratitude is due to man only for favours received : it is due to God likewise, and in an infinitely greater degree. The blessings that you have received, and daily do receive from him, are innumerable. Your gratitude, therefore, cannot be too great, nor expressed in too strong terms. Let not your gratitude consist in words only : extend it to your actions, and apply his blessings to the purposes for which he imparted them to you. Be not wearied in your acts of thanksgiving. The multitudes, as you have heard in this day's gospel, were three days constantly attending on our Lord, and listening to his word, without food. Let their example be an encouragement to you. Let not the love of good cheer, or dainty dishes, cause you to neglect, or suffer those under your charge to neglect the service of God on days allotted to his service. Let not the love of pleasure, or dissipating amusements, cause you to regret the devoting one hour or two to prayer, or hearing his holy word in his temple. Be convinced that you cannot do too much for God, considering how much he

has done for you. Be convinced, that every thing you do for God will procure for you new blessings. In a word, be convinced, that every thing which you do for God with piety and love, will not only procure for you an encrease of temporal blessings, but prepare your souls for the inheritance of an eternal kingdom. Fix these considerations deeply in your minds, and they will be an inducement to you to labour in such a manner, as to make your calling and election sure, and to make this life a passage only to that better and eternal life, for which alone you were made.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON GOOD WORKS.

*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.....*MATT. vii.

IN this day's gospel, our Lord in the first place admonishes his disciples to beware of false prophets, who come in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves, and then, as if referring particularly to these times of innovation and error, he inculcates the great moral duty of the gospel, of performing good works in order to secure our salvation. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*, or in other words, every Christian who doth not perform good works, *shall be cast into the fire*, even the fire of the bottomless abyss.

It will not be unseasonable, in these times, to call your attention to this important subject: for it may be said, that in these times the number of wolves in sheep's clothing, is greater than at any former period; and it may be

said, likewise, that the number of those, who still continue members of the Church, and fulfil not its duties, was never greater.—The easy doctrines of the one, and the pernicious examples of the other of these descriptions of people, are calculated to make, by degrees, an impression on your minds, and cause you to think less of the necessity of doing good works than its importance requires. It is the duty, therefore, of the Pastor, to expose before you, from time to time, the doctrine of the gospel on this subject, and to invite you to scrutinize your own conduct, and to ascertain whether or not you are deficient in the observance of it.

That good works are necessary for salvation, is one of the truths, which are most clearly expressed in the scriptures. In the words of my text our Lord declares that, *the tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire*: consequently, that good fruit must be produced, that is, good works must be performed, or eternal perdition will inevitably be our portion.—In the same day's gospel it is declared, that he alone *shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, who doeth the will of his Father, who is in heaven*. Now, the will of our heavenly Father is, that we keep his commandments, and observe all whatsoever he has enjoined us: and this is nothing less than a continuation of good works.—Disobedience to the commands of God, was the cause why the apostate angels were cast out of heaven, and

our first parents out of paradise ; and we are well assured, that every descendant of Adam, who wilfully persists in the same crime, will be for ever excluded from the heavenly paradise. Hence the following argument is clearly deduced, that, if disobedience exclude from the kingdom of heaven, obedience is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain possession of that kingdom.

In fact, why reason on this subject, or what necessity is there, to quote scripture to prove a point, which is directly, or indirectly, acknowledged by all ? For, whatever may be the speculative opinion of any one, concerning the necessity or merit of good works, he is forced, and in fact is ready to acknowledge, that neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor evil-doers of any description, will ever enter into the kingdom of heaven ; which is nothing less than a virtual acknowledgment, that the chaste, the temperate, the doers of good, will alone obtain possession of that kingdom ; and consequently, that good works are necessary for salvation.—To say that salvation is to be obtained through the merits of Christ alone, is a mere subterfuge. The merits of Christ, all-sufficient as they are, will not save the hardened and abandoned sinner. A person must avoid evil, and do good, or he will never be saved ; and consequently, good works are necessary. That these works, in order that they may be acceptable in the sight of God, must be sancti-

fied, and rendered pleasing by the blood of Christ, is what all acknowledge : but this does not prevent them from being necessary for salvation.

But, can it be said absolutely, that good works are meritorious, or deserving a reward in the sight of God ? Of themselves, certainly not. And in this sense we say, that the good works of unbelievers, of obstinate sinners, of those who, like the Pharisees, do their works that they may be seen and applauded by men, have no merit whatever in the sight of God. But when a Christian does good, through sentiments of piety, and for the purpose of fulfilling the will of God, they are deserving of a reward, and of an eternal reward, through the merits of Christ. On this subject, likewise, the scriptures are explicit. *When thou dost alms, says our Lord, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth ; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee. . . . When thou fastest . . . appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret ; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee.* (Matt. vi.) *A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward.* (Matt. x.) *They who instruct others unto justice, shall shine like stars for all eternity.* (Dan. xii.) In these few quotations, a reward is promised for good works, consequently they are meritorious. But this subject

is more clearly expressed in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew. In the account, which is there given, of the great day of final retribution, happiness or misery everlasting is awarded on account of the performance or neglect of good works. It is not said, that the chosen servants of God are admitted into heaven, because they are chosen, nor the reprobate condemned because they are cut off: but the one are rewarded, and the others punished, on account of good works performed, or neglected. *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire. . . . because I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat, &c. Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you. . . . because I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, &c.* (Matt. xxv.) St. Paul, likewise, in that very epistle to the Romans, in which it is pretended that the inefficacy of good works is established, clearly demonstrates, that our lot in the next world will be decided by our works, and that the hearers of the law, or they who look to faith alone, will not be justified, unless they likewise do the works of the law. (*Rom. iii.*) *God will render to every man according to his works. To them, indeed, who, according to patience in good work, seek glory and honour, and incorruption, eternal life: but to them that are contentious, and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation, Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil. . . . but glory, and*

honour, and peace to every one that worketh good. . . . For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Upon this subject, however, I will not enlarge any farther. I am now speaking to men, who believe that good works are necessary; and that, through the merits of Christ, they will be meritorious to salvation. To you, therefore, I will turn my attention, and invite you to examine how far it is that you comply with the will of God on this subject.

Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. . . . and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. These, my brethren, are the words of our Law-giver. Examine the import of them, and judge yourselves by them, now, that you may escape the severe judgment which you will otherwise have to endure, when you are summoned before his awful tribunal.—*Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.* You are trees planted in the vineyard of your Lord: consequently, it is required that you all bring forth fruit, each according to his kind. In whatever condition of life you may be, whether in the state of affluence, or in the state of abject poverty;—whether in the state of ease and splendour, or whether obliged to devote your time to hard labour, for the support of yourselves and families;—whether you are male, or whether you are female;—whether you are adopted into the ministry, or whether you remain in the number

of the laity ;—whether you are young, or whether you are old ; you are all required to bring forth good fruit: and if you do not bring forth good fruit, you shall be cut down, and cast into the fire. There is no exception to this decree. It comprises all and every one of the human race.

I will not say, that all are required to bring forth the same kind of fruit, or, in other words, to perform the same kind of good works. For, if this were the case, how much harder would the gospel bear upon the poor, and upon the constant labourer, with respect to works of charity, than upon the rich ! But, all must perform good works, each individual according to the power which is accorded to him. The poor mechanic, or he who is obliged to devote six days in the week to constant labour, has but little time for works of charity. He can attend but little to the wants of his fellow-creatures in distress : he has but little to bestow on the hungry, or the thirsty.—Providence, however, placed him in that state ; and, as the word of God says, where little is given, little will be required. To bestow a little, therefore, is all that is required of him.

But, although he can devote but little to the works of charity, he can do much for the honour and glory of God, and the sanctification of his own soul. He can avoid sin, and the occasions of sin. He can attend to the presence of God, during the time he is at work, by the spirit of

interior recollection:—he can sanctify his labours, by performing them all with the pure intention of pleasing God:—he can be constant in his attendance to the service of God on Sundays, and be faithful in the discharge of his morning and evening devotions:—he can be sincerely penitent for his past offences, and frequent the sacraments at stated times:—he can be just and honest in his dealings, and do to others, that which he would wish them to do to him:—he can be a kind and good husband, a sincere friend, a lover of good works:—he can attend to his children, and bring them up in the fear and love of God:—he can give good example to the multitudes of the wicked, which surround him on every side: in a word, he can love God with his whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. All these things may be done by every man or woman, who are obliged to constant labour; and they may be done without injury to their temporal concerns, and without difficulty, excepting only that of taking off their affections from the perishable things of this world, and fixing them on the good things of eternity. A sincere good will is alone required, and the grace of God will enable them to do it.

Oh! when we see a poor man, a mechanic, a labourer, faithful in the performance of the few works above rehearsed, how edifying is the spectacle! How much do we admire his piety! What good effects are produced by his exam-

ple! And yet, there is nothing extraordinary in his way of life:—nothing but what every man and woman, even in the lowest state of life, and whether young or old, may, and are bound to perform, as they value the salvation of their souls.

As to the affluent, or they in easy circumstances, their obligation to perform good works, extends to greater lengths. They are not only obliged to sanctify their ordinary actions by the spirit of recollection and piety:—to keep themselves in the presence of God;—to frequent the sacraments;—to do penance for their sins;—to be meek and humble, patient, just, and kind;—to love God above all things, and their neighbours as themselves, but they are required to perform works of charity to their afflicted brethren, and these works must be proportioned to the means, which Providence has been pleased to put into their hands. This is not merely a matter of counsel. It is a precept, and it ought strictly to be observed. For, from what source does their affluence proceed? Is it not from the hand of God? And why is it his ordinance that it should flow into their bosom? Is it not that they should *make to themselves friends of the mammon of iniquity*, and, by their well distributed charities, *lay up to themselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth can consume, nor thieves break in and steal?* (Matt. vi.) Yes: it is for these reasons that riches are entrusted to them; and

where *much is given, much will be required.* (Luke xii.)

But, who are the affluent? This is a question which must not be answered by the affluent themselves. There are few of those, who pride themselves on their fine houses and possessions, who will acknowledge that they are in easy circumstances, when charity is requested. The question must be solved by the disinterested. The disinterested will say, that they are to be reckoned amongst the affluent, whose income, arising either from paternal inheritance, from trade, or from other sources, exceeds their expenditure, including those, likewise, whose income would exceed their expenditure, provided that they did not squander away their money in luxury and pride. According to this decision, therefore, and it is a decision in unison with sound reason, people of this description are to be reckoned in the number of the affluent, from whom works of charity are required in proportion to their affluence. — What that proportion may be, I will not take on myself to determine: for the Church has determined nothing on that subject. But, to judge from the ordinances of God, in the Old Law, perhaps it would not be too much to say, that the tithe, or tenth part, would be a just proportion. At all events, the person, who is a sincere Christian, and who truly loves God and his neighbour, would rather exceed, than diminish that pro-

portion: particularly when he considers that money, thus distributed, is not money lost, but a treasure laid by for his own use in another world,—*a never failing treasure in heaven.*—In fact, how many have there been, in every age, who have sold all that they had, and have given it to the poor, that they might have treasures in heaven. And shall any Christian hesitate, and refuse to part with a tithe of his annual savings, for that same purpose?

I am well aware that they, whose disposition leads them to place their happiness in the increase of their perishable stores, will not readily agree to this measure. They will bring forward reasons to prove that it would be imprudent, and even unjust, to part with their property. They will say, that they have a family to provide for, and that it is their duty to lay by a competency for each of their children. This is very just. But, by what measure is that competency to be decided? Is it by the measure of family pride and vain-glory? And, in order to fill up that measure, is it prudent to exclude Jesus Christ, in the persons of the poor, from the number of their children? Will the blessing of God be upon their offspring, when their exaltation in the world is, in part, owing to the oppression of the poor? No: such a plea is not founded either on prudence or reason, on the love of their children, or the love of themselves.

But they will say again, that their payments

of the poors' rate are very heavy, and that they can afford no more. Were these payments made in the spirit of Christian Charity, or for the love of God, they would be acts truly meritorious of the rewards of charity. But how frequently is it, that they are wrung from them against their will, and every title forfeited to a reward hereafter. Were it, however, that by these forced contributions all the poor were provided for, and that no objects of private charity were to be found, then their plea of excuse would be admitted. But this is not the case. There are still poor distressed objects in abundance : and they have the means of administering to their relief. The duty, therefore, is still incumbent on them, and no power on earth can remove it. Ah ! were they as solicitous to retrench superfluities in dress, and the unnecessary expenses of pride and sensuality, as they are to find excuses not to relieve the poor, the fortunes of their children would not be diminished by all the charities which religion requires of them

In addition to this of relieving the distressed, there is another good work, which the affluent are enabled to perform, and which is particularly deserving of a future reward :—I mean, *visiting the poor sick*. These unfortunate objects, when laid on the bed of sickness, are truly objects of compassion. They can look for no comfort from this world, and many of them on account of their ignorance, particular-

ly in this country, can derive little consolation from the prospect of the next. To run, therefore, to the bed of sickness, to speak words of comfort to these poor creatures,—to excite them to sorrow for their past offences,—to reconcile them to the will of God,—to administer to them spiritual assistance, and corporal relief, when necessary, oh ! where can there be a greater act of charity ! and what can be more pleasing in the eyes of the Almighty, the Father of the poor and afflicted !——We sometimes hear of good men, and pious ladies, who are the comfort of all around them : who do not content themselves with sending a trifle to a poor sick person, but who go and visit him ; who enquire into his wants, both corporal and spiritual ; and who, with very little trouble, and no great expense, impart to their suffering fellow-creatures the greatest blessings that can be bestowed by one human being on another. We sometimes hear of such good people, and even in the higher ranks of life. And the blessings which the whole country round pray may be showered down upon them and their children, prove the excellence of this work of charity. And yet, they do no more than what every good Christian ought to do.——This being the case, how deficient are they, who know nothing of the poor in their afflictions ;—whose houses are known to be houses, where it is useless to go and describe the wants of a poor sick man ;—who seldom bestow a trifle, and when they do bestow a trifle, accom-

pany it with reproaches, painful in the extreme to minds already overpowered with afflictions :—who, in a word, seem to feel only for relatives and friends when on the bed of sickness, and thereby prove that it is not charity, but human affection, that animates their mind, and guides their feelings. Such people as these are surely deficient in a most essential point ; and however they may calm their consciences by long prayers and other pious exercises, there is every reason to fear that they will be called to a severe account, when they appear before the tribunal of the God of charity.

Examine into your past lives, my brethren, and ascertain how you have acted in this respect. Remember that, *where much is given, much will be required* : and that *the tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire*. Let it be your solicitude, henceforward, to *bring forth fruit in due season*. Endeavour, by good works, to *make your calling and election sure*. (2 Pet. i.) *Redeem the time, for the days are evil*. (Eph. v.) *Lay up treasures for yourselves, where neither moth nor rust can consume, nor thieves break in and steal*. (Matt. vi.) Labour to produce all the fruit in your power : and make it the business of your lives to conduct yourselves in such a manner, as that it may be said of you : *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for their works follow them*. (Apoc. xiv.)

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light..... LUKE xvi. 8.

IN the parable of this day's gospel, we read the account of a steward, who, when on the point of being discharged from his stewardship, consulted his own temporal well-being, at the expense of conscience, and by every means in his power, not even disdaining dishonest means, provided for his future support. From this anxiety of the worldly man, and from this solicitude for self-preservation, which is to be found in the breasts of men who are strangers to the principles of honour and honesty, our Lord draws an excellent lesson, and proposes it to the consideration of those who wish to be his disciples.

The Christian is taught that salvation is his principal concern:—that he is placed in this world for a short time only:—and that he

is here for no other purpose but to prepare himself for an eternity of happiness:—that, if he neglect this great work, and instead of attending to his master's business, squanders away the talents entrusted to his care, he will be condemned to an eternity of misery. This is the prospect before his eyes—a prospect far more terrific than the prospect of poverty to the worldling. If, therefore, the prospect, or the dread of poverty, pushes on the worldling to exert every power, and to have recourse even to dishonest means, in order to ward off its approach, with what greater reason ought a Christian to exert every means in his power, and to do even those things, which, in the words of our Saviour, may be described as *hating his own soul* in this world, in order to avert the sentence of eternal torments, which he has deserved on account of his sins! How much does it behove him to be as wise in his generation, as are the children of the world! How much does it behove him to make *friends to himself of the mammon of iniquity, that, when these shall fail, they may receive him into everlasting dwellings*. Such is the lesson which our Lord intends to inculcate to us in this day's gospel. A few reflections on it, will not be unworthy your most serious consideration.

Were men to weigh, with mature deliberation, the motives which induced the great Creator to bring them into existence, and were they frequently to revolve in their thoughts, that

dreadful alternative which awaits them, after the close of this mortal life, namely, happiness, or misery everlasting : then, the things of this world would sink to their proper level in their esteem. They would not be preferred before the things which are to come ; nor would they be sought after with so much eagerness. On the contrary, the talents, and the contrivances of men, would be directed to the acquisition of that, which would never be taken from them :—to the acquisition of an inheritance, which would enrich them with all that is good—an inheritance, more valuable than the whole world itself.

Our being consists chiefly, and I may say, almost wholly, of an immortal soul—an aerial and spiritual substance, if the expression may be allowed, similar in every respect to that of angels. It was created for the purpose of enjoying infinite and eternal happiness, in an ineffable union with its Creator. It has nothing earthly or mortal in it : nor has it, of its own nature, any tendency, or disposition, to receive enjoyment from earthly, or mortal things. This pure substance—the soul, is united to an earthly and mortal substance, called the body, for no other purpose than that this body might be a medium, through which she may experience trials and temptations, and by her patient endurance, or resistance, prove her fidelity, and acquire a title to a reward hereafter.

This, my brethren, was the grand object,

which the Almighty had in view, when he united our souls to this perishable clay, which we call our bodies. This union of spiritual with corporal, of immortal with mortal, has duties attached to it which the Almighty requires should be fulfilled, although they are only of a temporal nature. This mortal part of our existence must be supported: and it must be supported by the mutual exertions of both soul and body: it must be maintained *by the sweat of the brow*. God created this world, and invigorated it with vegetative power, for the express purpose that it may correspond to the labours of mortal man, and produce those things, which are necessary for his subsistence; and consequently, as he was pleased to interest himself for the maintenance of the body, it is the duty of man to embrace the means, which he has provided, and to labour, as far as is necessary, for that purpose.—But then, the duty extends no farther than this. When a man has procured by labour, or other honest means, what is necessary for the support of his own body, or for those who are dependent on him, the duty is fulfilled: and, although it may be praiseworthy to endeavour to lay by, for the comfortable support of children, or for the demands of charity, it is not a duty which the law of God, and which is no other than the law of nature, rightly understood, imposes. A Christian, whose labours have no connection but with the day which is, may literally follow the

advice of our Saviour: *be not solicitous for to-morrow, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? The morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.* (Matt. vi.)

The great, the principal duty imposed on all and every individual amongst us, is to attend to our spiritual part—the immortal soul; to exert our whole endeavours to promote its sanctification, and to prepare it for the possession of that eternal happiness, for which it was created. This is our great duty. This is the business for which we were made: and this ought to occupy our attention every day, and every hour of our lives.

Now, were we as wise in our generation as are the children of the world;—were we as much concerned about the welfare of the soul, as they are about the welfare of the body;—were we as solicitous to learn the means of procuring the good things of eternity, as they are to learn how to obtain possession of perishable things;—were we as earnest, and as persevering, in reducing to practice the lessons of piety which have been given to us, as are the children of the world in the arts and sciences;—were we as watchful to seize the favourable opportunities, which present themselves, of adding to our stock of spiritual treasures, as are the children of the world to add to their temporal possessions;—were we as prompt and eager to correct the errors and

imperfections, into which we fall, as are the children of the world in making up the losses, which they experience, then we should be as wise in our own generation as they are :—then, we should be wise indeed :—then, we should be wise to eternity. Happiness would beam upon us, and we should, with reason, be called the children of light. The prospect of eternal bliss, which would be expanded in the distant view, would enliven the dreary paths of our earthly pilgrimage, would sooth all our pains, lighten all our afflictions, and encourage us to unremitting exertions in the cause of all that is valuable and permanent.

How is it, my brethren, that matters stand with us in these respects ? Are we children of light, or children of the world ? This is a question of no small importance; for, in the sight of God, there are only these two denominations of men; and into these two divisions only, will the whole race of Adam be separated at the day of judgment. To which of them, therefore, do we belong ? In what is it that we are wise ? Is it in devising, and putting in practice, the means of securing the salvation of our souls ? Or is it in exerting our talents, and our strength, in providing for ourselves the things of this world, with little or no concern for the next ? Pause a moment. Consider this question leisurely. Give it due deliberation. Let each one say to himself : “ Which am I most solicitous for ? riches, honours, and plea-

asures in this world, or treasures in the world to come? Which do I labour most earnestly for? the meat that perisheth, or the sanctifying grace which is to save my soul? Which am I most willing to sacrifice, my own will, and my own interest in this world, or my spiritual duties, and my advancement in the ways of God?" These are simple questions, which we may easily put to ourselves, and very easily reply to. We cannot deceive ourselves in the answers which our consciences will suggest, unless it is that we are determined to be deceived.

Turn your thoughts, therefore, attentively to this subject. Suffer not the prejudices of self-love to bias your judgment. Do not, like the Pharisees, attribute to yourselves virtues which you do not possess. Throw no veil over your failings. Examine your works. Scrutinize the affections of your soul. In a word, be candid. And then, if you can give a satisfactory reply to the questions above stated, you may be assured that the words of my text are not applicable to you.

But, alas! how few are there, who can give this testimony of themselves. If we look into the world at large, how little do we see of true piety! how universally does all flesh seem to have corrupted its ways.—If we confine our view to the inhabitants of our own neighbourhood, or even to the members of our own congregation, or, to confine the subject within straiter limits, how small is the number in the circle even of

our acquaintance, who seem to make salvation their principal concern, and whose talents and wisdom are uniformly directed to the acquisition of the *one thing necessary* ! We may come, therefore, to this conclusion, that, of the immense multitude which surround us on every side, seldom is there one to be found, who is uniformly guided by the spirit of God in all his actions and affections, and who is truly perfect in the sight of God : that seldom one is to be found, who is not influenced unduly, in a greater or less degree, by the spirit of the world, and by an inordinate attachment to earthly things ; and that seldom or never one is to be found, who has not many faulty things to correct, either in his thoughts, words, actions, or omissions, and who has not many imperfections to fight against, and to conquer. Of these few, we cannot indeed speak in severe terms of reproof. Their imperfections arise from the weakness, and not from the depravity of human nature. They sincerely wish, and seek to serve God, and to sanctify their souls. And, as long as these are their dispositions, altho', like the just man in the Scripture, (*Prov. xxiv.*) they may *fall seven times*, they will, nevertheless, be reckoned in the number of the children of God, and, if they persevere to the end, their lot will be in the company of the saints.

But, with respect to that immense multitude, from whom these last mentioned are exceptions, what shall we say ? We must say, ac-

according to the gospel, that they are deficient in the most essential duties, some more, some less, according to the way of life which they lead, and that they are, more or less, the children of the world. For salvation being the end of their creation, all their actions and desires ought to tend to it ; and, if they do not tend to it, they tend to some other object, which has no connection with salvation. What that object may be, it matters not. For, as long as it is not the salvation of their souls, it is the world, or the things of the world, in one shape or another. It is mammon. And who is there that can serve God and mammon at the same time ? No : my brethren, the very act of striving to serve two masters, proves that their affections are divided, and that a great, if not the greatest share, is given to the world. Now if the first and greatest command is, that we love God with our *whole* heart, and mind, and strength, are not they deficient in the most important of all duties, who offer to God only a divided heart ? Are not they deficient in their endeavours to gain heaven, who prefer their own interest, their own will, their own honour and glory in the world, before the performance of these duties, on which their salvation depends ? Truly, my brethren, these are all children of the world. And what sentence can they expect will be passed on them, when they appear before the tribunal of their Lord and Saviour ? We have heard the sentence passed upon the

foolish virgins ; and can we expect that these foolish admirers of the world will hear more favourable words than, " I know you not. You knew not me, when in the midst of your worldly occupations and festivities : and now that these things are passed away like a shadow, you pretend to seek me as your only hope : but I know you not."

Upon examining, however, into the general conduct of this immense multitude of our fellow-creatures, we shall discover many other weighty reasons for ranking them among the children of the world. In general, they perform their spiritual duties with a certain kind of loathing, and not unfrequently neglect them altogether. They perform no voluntary acts of mortification and penance. They seek themselves, and not God, in all that they do. They are headstrong and passionate. They are subject to ill tempers, to animosities, detraction, and vain-glory. They are puffed up with pride, and are ambitious only of shining in the eyes of men.—Now, can it be said that any of these things are agreeable to the spirit of the gospel ? And if they are not agreeable to the spirit of the gospel, to what spirit do they belong ? To the spirit of the world :—to the spirit, that is at enmity with God. And what can be expected after death, by those who, during life, have been animated with the spirit that is at enmity with God ? Ah ! if our blessed Lord has declared, that he will deny

before his heavenly Father, those who have denied him before men, with what severity will he treat those, who have not merely denied him in words, but whose whole lives have been spent in opposition to his blessed will ! If our Lord has declared that, unless our *justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*, with what indignation will he reject those, whose morality has not been superior even to that of Pagans !

Oh ! my brethren, examine whether you are of the number of this unhappy multitude or not. If you are, although I do not wish to be too severe, or to terrify you unnecessarily, yet I should not be doing my duty, were I not to say, that you are walking in the broad road in which the multitude walk—the broad road, that leadeth to perdition. The scriptures are too explicit on this subject : their meaning cannot be mistaken. You are walking in the broad road, and unless you speedily forsake that road, and seek for the narrow path, which is trod only by the truly virtuous, your salvation is almost hopeless.

I know, indeed, that at whatever hour the sinner returns to God, he will be favourably received : and consequently, that, if a sinner be sincerely penitent, even on his death-bed, his repentance will be accepted. But who can assure you that you will have time and means for sincere repentance, if you go on in the ways of sin till that important moment arrives ?

When is there a time, when a poor sinner is more exposed to the danger of delusion, than on his death-bed, with eternity before his eyes? How natural is it for a poor soul, seeing herself slipping down the precipice, at the foot of which are widely expanded the gates of hell, and on the brink of which she has been heedlessly playing during the time of health, instead of removing herself to a distance from it; how natural, I say, is it for her to catch at every twig, and to listen to every consolatory word which may remove her fears of falling into that dread abyss? How often have I witnessed scenes of this kind! How often have I been necessitated to administer the last resources of religion to sinners, who always flattered themselves that they should have time for repentance, and who were too far gone, to allow me to flatter myself that these resources would secure their eternal welfare! How often has it been, that I have not had an opportunity of administering even these, which may be called, in their state, *desperate* means, for recovering the health of their souls, (the spark of life being already gone!)—But, nevertheless, whatever compassion I, as a minister of peace, may have shewn to sinners in the distressing state, when their last hour is come upon them unawares; whatever words of comfort and of hope I may have held out to them, (and hope we may certainly entertain, for the Spirit breathes where he will, and it is not our province to

judge) still it is my duty to say to you, who are in health, that as a man lives, so he shall die ; that it is hopeless to think that you will be able to begin to live to God, when you are no longer able to live for the world ; and that it is in vain to expect to be able effectually and in affection to renounce sin, when it is that you can sin no longer. No : if you seek not God during life, you will not find him in death. And, if you reject his invitations during the days of your strength, he will laugh and mock at your destruction, when that, which is evil, is come upon you.

Let me exhort you, therefore, my brethren, to look well to your own interests. *Be wise, as it becometh you to be wise* :—be wise unto salvation. Exert the powers both of body and soul, in providing for your happiness in the next world, as well as for your support in this. You labour for your daily maintenance with solicitude and perseverance. Be solicitous, and labour with perseverance for the possession of spiritual good things. I do not say, that you must devote as much time to the exercises of prayer, as you do to labour, as if one were incompatible with the other : but be regular and earnest, and attentive in the performance of your spiritual duties, as you are in the performance of your daily occupations. And, when you are at your work, be as solicitous to obtain the blessing of God upon your labour, by offering it up to his honour and

glory, as you are to give satisfaction to your employer, and to obtain your hire.

Employ your talents, therefore, in endeavouring to secure the salvation of your souls. Do not suffer the children of the world to be more wise in providing for their temporal welfare, than you are in preparing yourselves for the rewards of the just made perfect. Offer violence to yourselves, when you discover that you are disposed to neglect any of your duties. Consider, that you must be violent in your conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is not by half measures that the kingdom of heaven is to be obtained. You must be violent, if you sincerely desire to obtain heaven. You must lay up treasures, where neither moth nor rust can consume, before you can expect that they will receive you into everlasting dwellings.

Set about this great work, therefore, in good earnest. Be as wise in your generation, as are the children of the world. Make use of the mammon of iniquity, for the purposes for which it was given to you. Make all things contribute to the sanctification of your souls. Have eternity always before your eyes; and then you may say with a kind of certainty, that you are the *children of light*, and that the good things of the world to come will be your happy portion for endless ages.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON ATTENDING TO THE INSPIRATIONS OF GOD.

If thou hadst also known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes..... LUKE xix. 41.

IT is related in the gospel of this day, that our Lord wept over Jerusalem, on account of the evils which were about to fall on that unhappy city, because *she did not know the time of her visitation*. He himself, had vouchsafed to visit her. He had entered into her temple. He had *filled that house with glory, and had made the glory of that last house, greater than that of the first.* (Aggeus ii.) He had opened to her the secrets of heaven, and had preached to her, the things that were for her peace. But her eyes were blinded: she would not know *the time of her visitation*. She would not acknowledge him for the Messiah. She rejected him; and was about to crucify him: and, on those accounts, the severest judgments were about to avenge the insulted

honours and mercies of the Deity—judgments, which were not to be confined to the beating down of stone walls, or such like temporal calamity, but judgments of a more severe nature, *obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence*. These were the evils that called forth the tears of the Son of God.

You, my brethren, yes, every individual amongst you, may consider the words of this gospel as applicable to himself. Each one may consider himself as the Jerusalem—the city of God—the temple of God, against which this severe sentence is pronounced, if he suffer the *day of his visitation* to pass by unheeded. You all have that day. The things that are for your peace, are made known to you all. If, when this great favour is imparted to you, you do not acknowledge the Lord to be your God, by devoting your lives to his service; if, notwithstanding all the inspirations and graces conferred on you, you continue to oppose the reign of his truth by indulging in criminal excesses yourselves, or by encouraging others to do the same, by exhortation or example, then the Lord weeps over you, as it were, and laments that *the day of your visitation* is hidden from your eyes, or carelessly neglected by you; knowing that the severest judgments are hanging over your heads, even *obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence*.

It may be said, that God deals out his graces to sinners by measure: that he favours them,

at times, with particular invitations to return to the paths of virtue: that, if these graces are corresponded with, he grants them an encrease: and, if these again produce their effect, that he showers down upon them his blessings with the greatest profusion. But that, if they refuse to listen to his voice, his anger is excited, and, after the appointed measure of his grace is filled up, and squandered away, they are left to themselves, and given up to a reprobate sense, because they did not, or would not, *know the time of their visitation*.

It is in this manner, my brethren, that the Almighty deals with you. During the time that you are habituated to criminal excesses of any kind, or, as long as you are separated from the paths of strict virtue and piety, he frequently visits you with his interior inspirations. He causes you to feel, from time to time, a disrelish of the sensual gratifications in which you have indulged, and a certain anxiety, and uneasiness of mind, which induces you to enter into yourselves, so far as to condemn your past conduct. He causes you to feel a dread of his future judgments, and to shudder at the prospect of eternal woe, which is vividly represented before you.—By these merciful inspirations, he instils into your minds, desires of extricating yourselves from the slavery of corruption, of correcting what has hitherto been contrary to his holy law, and of living, henceforward, according to the dictates of reason

and religion. These are the visitations of God, and these you have all received, in a greater or less degree, whenever you have transgressed against any of the commands of God.

But, in order to place this point in the clearest light, I will notice some vices in particular, and describe the visitations which the sinner experiences, after having yielded to them. The Christian, who yields to the temptations of impurity, if it be only in thought, stands immediately self-condemned, even in his own presence alone. If he commit any determinate act of impurity, either with himself or others, his conscience immediately upbraids him; he is ashamed of himself; he seems to think that the friends whom he meets, are conscious of his disgraceful deed: he knows that he has debased the dignity of his nature; and nothing can reconcile him to himself, but the determination of never more yielding his members to serve iniquity.—These are his *visitations*.

The man who is addicted to drunkenness, to excessive passion, to cursing, swearing, and the like, experiences visitations of a similar kind. No sooner is he recovered from the agitation occasioned by his passion, or from the effects which were brought on by his intemperance, than he is conscious to himself that he has done wrong: every attempt at self-justification is useless: his conscience loudly condemns him; and he is interiorly convinced

that there are no other means of regaining his peace of mind, and of preserving it, than sincere repentance for the past, and effectual resolutions, founded on the grace of God, of never yielding to the tempter for the time to come.

—These are his *visitations*.

The man who, although regular in his attendance at the public service of the Church, and punctual to his morning and evening exercise, at the same time, performs these duties negligently, entertains distractions wilfully, or labours not incessantly to remove them:—the man, who neglects the sacraments, or who has recourse to them, only when the commands of the Church enforce the obligation, and has no other plea for his neglect, than the want of inclination, has visitations, but they are different from those of the former. He feels not the pangs of remorse: because, having formed to himself, an erroneous idea of the sanctity to which every Christian is bound to aspire, he has decided in his own mind, that a certain decent exterior, and an alienation of affection from the grosser gratifications of the flesh, is all that is required of him. He feels neither the warmth of piety, nor the required hatred of sin. He is like the Pharisee, who gloried in imaginary perfections, merely because he was not like the rest of men, *extortioners, adulterers, &c.* To them may be addressed the words, which are addressed to the Bishop of Laodicea, in the Revelations (c. iii.) *I know thy works,*

that thou art neither cold nor hot: I wish that thou wert either cold or hot: but because thou art tepid, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. This man does not absolutely condemn himself, because he sees no absolute cause for condemnation. He reckons himself as just, because he is not conscious of any thing that is absolutely unjust. But yet he has, from time to time, his visitations. Every time that he hears the word of God, inculcating the necessity of practising virtues which he neglects, or of advancing in virtue, which he does not; every model, or seeming model of perfection presented before his eyes, in the regular conduct of the more pious among his acquaintance, causes him to enter a protest, in his mind, against the propriety of his own conduct. He does not severely condemn himself, like those who have been cold in the service of God, or totally neglectful of their spiritual concerns: but he is conscious, from time to time, that he is not doing right: his heart misgives him: he feels that he is not doing as he should do: he condemns himself, at the very moment he is indulging his sloth: he passes sentence of condemnation on himself, almost before he has committed the offence.

These, my brethren, may truly be called visitations. They are merciful interpositions of the love of your heavenly Father. They are calls from him, inviting you to an amendment of life.—Were you to hear his voice from the

clouds, every time that you transgressed his commands, or neglected his service, condemning your weakness, and uttering the severest threats of future punishment, you would not refuse to listen to it. On the contrary, you would be almost petrified with fear. You would tremble at the recollection of your past offences ; and you would feel, within yourselves, a determination never to offend again. And why so ? Because this audible voice would forcibly strike your corporal senses. Now the voice of this same God speaks to your inward senses by the feelings of remorse, which he communicates to the soul, after the commission of a crime : and what is the reason that it does not awe you into the same sentiments of fear and repentance ? Ah ! too frequently the reason is, because you are more under the influence of the outward, than of the inward man.

Let me, then, exhort you, my brethren, not to suffer these invitations of your God, to pass unnoticed. Listen to this interior voice. Attend to these calls of conscience. How long your God may continue to favour you with these invitations, you know not. We can only say that, if you turn a deaf ear to them now, the time will certainly come, sooner or later, when he will withdraw himself from you, and give you up to an obdurate sense. This has been the unhappy lot of thousands. There is, probably, not one amongst you, who has not witnessed an example of this kind. There is

not one who is not acquainted with some one or other, who formerly led a pious and exemplary life, but who, unhappily, has fallen away, has turned aside into the paths of sin, and now, is deaf to the voice of conscience, and will listen to no remonstrances, even from his dearest friends. What was it that produced this wonderful change in him? What was it that caused him to turn away from piety, which he loved, and to embrace a life of sin, which, at that time, his soul detested? Oh! examine the reasons, my brethren, and take care that the same never prevail over you.—This change was not wrought in him on a sudden. No one becomes wicked all at once. It came upon him by degrees. At first he fell only into small faults. These he did not repent of, and correct in the manner he ought to have done. In proportion to his neglect, the voice of conscience became weakened. At length, he passed on from these lesser irregularities to crimes of greater magnitude. Conscience again loudly condemned him. He seemed to repent: but his repentance was of short continuance. His falls became frequent: and the grace of God was diminished in proportion. In the end, temptations rushed in upon him like a torrent. His soul became a prey to the depravity of corrupt nature; and the most filthy sins became to him no longer objects of abhorrence. Thus it was that he fell. *He did not know the time of*

his visitation. When he neglected the inspirations of God, calling him to repentance, after his first transgressions, he did not *know the things that were for his peace.* Now, *these things are hidden from his eyes.* *For the day shall come upon him, and his enemies shall cast a trench about him, and compass him round, and straiten him on every side, and beat him flat to the ground.* Oh! how terrible are such falls! How difficult it is, after such falls, to be raised again from the ground, and to be renewed to repentance!

Take care, my brethren, that this be not your unfortunate lot. Gather wisdom from the experience of others. Take notice of *the day of your visitation*, and do not shut your eyes to the things which are for your peace. *Take heed lest ye fall.* (1 Cor. x.) Examine the ground on which you stand. Ascertain whether you are approaching to, or receding from the brink of the dreadful precipice. For this purpose, examine whether or not, you are fallen away from your *first fervour.* Look back into your past lives, and see, whether there ever was a time, when you served God better than you do now;—whether there ever was a time, when you were more attentive at your prayers, more regular in the frequentation of the sacraments, and more earnest in promoting the great business of your salvation;—whether there ever was a time, when you were more temperate, more chaste, more upright, more moral in every

respect.—If you can recollect that there was such a time, you may then truly say, that you have fallen away from your *first fervour*. And you will find, on examination, that your falling away was, as I above described, by little and little. Now, let me ask you, where is this to end, unless you strive manfully to gain what you have lost? The person, whose dreadful fall I have delineated, was, at one time, not farther advanced in the paths of unrighteousness, than what you now are : but he neglected the graces and inspirations of God. If you continue to be guilty of the same neglect, can you reasonably expect to avoid the precipice, into which he fell? It is a maxim in a spiritual life, that a Christian must *be continually encreasing, or decreasing in divine love*. This is a maxim, which the experience of all the Saints, and, in general, of all mankind, has proved to be true : consequently, I recommend it to your serious consideration. If you have fallen away from your first fervour, you must either continue to decrease in divine love, and to fall still more and more, or you must be encreasing in that heavenly virtue, and be regaining what you have lost. Either one or the other must be the case with every one of you. Is it, therefore, that you are on the encrease? Do not flatter yourselves with hopes. There must be a certainty. If you are on the encrease, the fruits will be manifest. You will perceive that you are

more in earnest, in fulfilling the duties of your religion, and that you are more watchful in resisting the temptations to sin.— But if you do not perceive these effects operating in your souls, is there not reason to say, that you are on the decrease? And what is to be expected, if you do not amend, and that very speedily? May we not say that you are on the brink of the precipice, and that perhaps your fall is at hand? The mercies of God are dealt out by measure, to those who refuse to profit by them. The more you lose of them, the fewer you will receive. In a short time, perhaps, the measure will be filled up: and then, if you have not profited by them, where will you look for more? Oh! too much reason will there be to fear, that the words of the Wise Man will be applicable to you: *you have despised my counsels, and have neglected my reprehensions. I will also laugh in your destruction, and will mock, when that which you feared is come upon you. Then shall you call upon me, and I will not hear.* (Prov. i.) Then will you say to yourselves: *Oh! had I known, and that in this my day, the things which were for my peace: but they were hidden from my eyes: and all these things are come upon me, because I did not know the time of my visitation.*

Be on your guard, therefore, my brethren. This is your day. The mercies of God are not yet exhausted. Endeavour, by increased diligence, to regain that which you have lost. Per-

severe in your endeavours, until you have a well-founded confidence that you have gained your point.—Relax not even then : but labour to ascend higher and higher towards perfection. Strive to love God better than you have ever hitherto done ; and to serve him with greater and greater fervour. Never think that you are sufficiently perfect. Always tend to something more excellent.

Be particularly cautious how you treat with your conscience. If it reproach you with any fault, however trivial it may be, always listen to its reproofs, and profit by them. If, for example, it seems to say to you, at any time, that you have been too negligent in the performance of any spiritual duty,—that you have spoken too freely of your neighbour's actions,—that you have not resisted temptation with sufficient energy,—or that you have transgressed in any point, against the laws of pure Christian charity towards any of your fellow-creatures, listen to its voice, and amend your fault. This is your duty ; and if you fulfil it, you will have acted like true Christians.—If, again, it seems to say to you, that you are not properly attentive to any of your religious duties,—or that you do not love God, in preference to every thing else, endeavour, with all earnestness, to make up the deficiency, and to advance henceforward in the ways of this holy love.—Then you will be putting to profit the inspirations of heaven.

212 NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

You will be making yourselves more and more acceptable in the eyes of your heavenly Father. You will have *known the day of your visitation* : and you will be laying up stores for yourselves in that happy place, where you will enjoy them for all eternity.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON PRIDE.

Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others..... LUKE xviii.

THE purport of the Parable, which I have read to you, does not require explanation. It is a clear and explicit condemnation of the pride of those who trust in themselves as just, and despise others ; and an unqualified commendation of the humility of those who debase themselves in their own eyes, and whose only trust and confidence is in the mercies of God.

It will not be necessary to bring forward arguments, to prove that Christian Piety is an utter stranger to that kind of pride, which is here described and condemned. Were it, indeed, the economy of Divine Providence, to award eternal happiness to his favoured creatures by election, without regard either to merit or demerit, and that this award was made known to

the fortunate objects of his choice, during their sojournment in this land of exile, the case would be different. A pious pride would be excusable, would be praise-worthy; for it would be nothing more than the feelings of gratitude to God for his gratuitous gifts. In fact, had such been the order of Providence, this parable would never have been spoken: for it would have been inconsistent, to condemn that man for trusting in himself as just, who had received a notification from heaven itself, that he was justified, and that his salvation was secure.

But this is not a doctrine emanating from the spirit of truth. The scriptures declare, that none others are justified, or acceptable in the sight of God, but they who are *little and humble, and who tremble at his words*, (Isa. lxvi.): that no one is secure of salvation, as long as he is in this world: that he only who perseveres to the end, shall be saved: and that, on account of the uncertainty, whether we shall persevere to the end or not, our only security is, to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. (Phil. ii.) That this is the doctrine of the gospel, you, who are here assembled, are well convinced; and of course, there is no danger of your entertaining that spirit of pride, which is freely indulged by those who conceive that they are just in the sight of God, and despise those whom they imagine to be left in a state of spiritual darkness.

However, without being of the number of these self-justified, or rather self-deluded people, it is possible that a sincere believer in the whole of the doctrines of the gospel, and who is convinced of the uncertainty which hangs over his future lot, may yet be puffed up with an imaginary idea of his own piety, and may look down with a kind of contempt on those, whose lives are not so regular and exemplary as his own. This kind of pride, however, is not very common. Christians, in these days, do not endeavour to distinguish themselves by superior morality, or by a strict adherence to the exterior duties of religion. It is not into this channel that the ambition of man is turned. When is it that we behold any of our acquaintance seeking applause, by praying at the corners of the streets, like the Pharisees? or by publicly chastising their bodies? or by adhering strictly to the rules of fasting? or by paying scrupulously the tithe of every thing they possess? When is it that we see them crowding to their place of worship, and frequenting the holy sacraments, for the purpose of exalting themselves in our esteem? Pride of this kind is seldom, or never witnessed. Perhaps it would be better for the advancement of Christian morality, were it of more frequent occurrence. At least, it would be less difficult to induce those people, who practised the duties of a Christian life, to practise them through motives of piety, and the love of God, and to

divest themselves of the spirit of pride, than to induce those to change their way of life, whose love of ease, or of earthly things, was so predominant in their breasts, as to cause them to feel a disrelish for the austere duties of the gospel. In the former, a reformation of intention alone is necessary ; in the latter, a reformation of conduct, and a total change of heart.

But, although there are few who take pride in spiritual things, there is unfortunately an immense multitude who take pride in things of another kind ;—who take pride in riches, beauty, talents, or worldly possessions. What numbers do we see, whose only ambition is wealth and splendor, whose whole souls are longing for earthly things alone ; and who affix not the least value on any thing beside ! What numbers are there, who toil and labour from morning till night, and who exert every power of body and mind, merely for the acquisition of temporal goods ? Who take pride in the little that they obtain, and consider themselves to be something, merely because they are not deprived of the less valuable blessings of the Almighty ! What multitudes are there of both of these descriptions ! Now, the nature of man is such, that, if it be not restrained by motives arising from the principles of the purest piety, it will take pride in itself for some imaginary excellence or another. Even the lowest, the most despicable of men, when piety has no place in

their breasts, will find causes and times to exalt themselves in their own esteem, and look for esteem and applause from others of their acquaintance, who are in the same rank of life as themselves. True humility is not found, but in the breast where true piety resides. Universal experience will prove the truth of this assertion. I draw from it the following important, and undeniable argument.—If the sentiments of self-esteem, which the Pharisee entertained on account of his imaginary merit, in adhering so strictly to the external observances of the law, were so hateful in the eyes of our Blessed Lord, as to cause him to pronounce that expressive sentence at the conclusion of the parable, *he that exalteth himself, shall be humbled*; how infinitely more hateful in his sight must that pride be, which exalteth itself, not on account of a strict attention to the duties of religion, but on account of worldly excellencies, on account of wealth, of honours, of beauty, of fine clothes, of learning, or of abilities? Can it be supposed that the soul, in which such pride exists, will return home justified? Can it be supposed that the man, who exalteth himself on such a sandy eminence, will not be humbled, and humbled to the lowest degree, either in this world, or in the next? The pride of the Pharisee has the appearance of a pious pride, and consequently, not so much deserving of humiliation; but the pride of this man is a worldly pride, and in direct opposition to the

honour and glory of God.—The Pharisee might plead in his favour, that his pride, criminal as it was, proved him to be religiously inclined ; that he had a regard for God and his service ; and that he submitted to the painful restraints of the law through the best of motives, namely, because these restraints had been enjoined by his great Creator. But the man, who prides himself on worldly considerations, has no plea of this kind in his favour. His pride is a demonstration that he is worldly inclined, that he is a child of the world, that his affections are fixed on the world, and that his solitudes and desires are centered in the world. His pride is a demonstration that he cares little for the service of God, or for his honour and glory : or, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, that he cares less for the service of God, and his honour and glory, than he does for the service of the world, and for his own advancement in the esteem of his fellow-creatures ; it is a demonstration, that he submits with less disrelish to the painful restraints which are imposed by the world, than he does to those which are imposed by religion.—The Pharisee might plead in his favour, that, in the law which he so strictly observed, the greatest promises were made to those who fulfilled all these external ordinances ; that the fulfilment of these ordinances was considered a high point of perfection ; and that glorying in the fulfilment of them, and preferring them—

selves before those who did not fulfil them, was not considered by the interpreters of the law as a transgression. But under the new law, the law of grace, the worldly proud are conscious that their pride is in direct opposition to the law, which they profess to follow. They are informed, that a proud man is an abomination in the sight of God. They are well assured, that all their possessions, all their qualities, both of body and mind, are gifts conferred on them by their Creator, and that, to glory in them, as if they had not received them from his hands, is nothing less than depriving him of the glory which is his due, and assuming, as it were, dominion over things which are solely under his direction. Moreover, they have before their eyes the example of the Messias, their model, *their way, their truth, and their life*. (John xiv.) They know that he left them, in his own person, an example of humility, and of contempt of worldly things, and that he commanded them to walk in his footsteps. They know that he despised riches, and honours, and pleasures, and that he renounced them to that degree, as frequently not to have *a place whereon to lay his head*. (Luke ix.) They know, that he likewise despised all other objects of worldly pride; and that, both by word and example, he endeavoured to instil into the minds of his disciples the same contempt for all transitory things, in order that their affections should be

fixed on those things alone, which would never be taken from them.

The Pharisee, in the contempt which he expressed for sinners, seemed to show forth a zeal for the honour and glory of God. He condemned the Publican, because he conceived that he was a man of a disorderly life: he condemned him, because he conceived him to be, by his profession, a violator of the law. He condemned him, unjustly; but the motives, which induced him to pass sentence upon him, were such as would not be considered very criminal, even by Christians in these times. The pride, on the other hand, which induces worldlings to exalt themselves, and to despise others, has not even a shadow of zeal for the honour and glory of God. They look neither to the vices nor the virtues, of those whom they esteem or despise. They look down with contempt on the man who serves his God, as on him who lives in the open violation of his laws. Wealth or beauty, are sufficient recommendations in their eyes; and poverty and rags, are more than ample proof that he possesses no quality worthy of their regard. In a word, their chief or only criterion of merit or demerit, is the world.

This is the nature of the pride, which we too generally witness in the followers of the world. These are the motives which induce the admirers of vanity to exalt themselves, and to despise, or at least, treat with a kind of supercilious con-

tempt, those who do not possess the things of this world, so largely as they do themselves. Now, if the pride of the Pharisee, a pride, which would be considered by few in these times, as bordering even on criminality in the sight of God, was, nevertheless, so severely condemned by Him, to whom judgment and justice belong, with what severity will these unhappy men be judged, whose pride will not admit of the least plea of excuse? Truly may we say, that they who *exalt themselves*, without being exalted by God, *will be humbled*. The day will come, when they shall be cast down from that imaginary eminence, on which they stand, and they shall be debased below the level of the lowest of those, above whom they have so proudly exalted themselves. *I have seen the wicked*, says the Royal Prophet, *highly exalted, and lifted up like the cedars of Lebanon: and I passed by, and lo, he was not: and I sought him, and his place was not found. . . . The unjust shall be destroyed together; the remnants of the wicked shall perish.* (Ps. xxxvi.) Yes: their days shall pass away like a shadow, and the day of the Lord shall come upon them suddenly. Then shall humiliation and degradation succeed to their former boasted and imaginary pre-eminence. Then shall they sink to their proper level, and appear to be what they actually are, the enemies of God, and beings unworthy of the esteem or regard of the poorest and most despicable of the human race.

Oh! my brethren, God forbid that any of you should be tainted with this abominable vice, and exposed to its unhappy consequences! Be on your guard against pride, in whatever form it may present itself before you. It is an insinuating vice. It is a vice, which will creep imperceptibly into the soul, and lie lurking in its inmost recesses, and not be discovered without the minutest examination. It is a vice, which infects, in a greater or less degree, almost every individual of mankind. It is a vice, which we all feel disposed to cherish; and he, who thinks that he has no pride, has generally a large share of it.—Be, therefore, on your guard against it.

You, who are strictly attentive to all your religious duties, guard against the pride of the Pharisee. Do not exalt yourselves in your own esteem. Do not compare yourselves with others, lest you should unjustly give the preference to yourselves. Do not condemn those, whose lives have hitherto been disorderly; for, perhaps, at the moment you pass the sentence, they may be, like the Publican, true penitents in the sight of God, and return home justified rather than you. In a word, seek not to be exalted in the eyes of others, lest the sentence pronounced on the Pharisee, should be pronounced also on you.

You, who do not experience in yourselves any symptoms of this spiritual pride;—you, who exhibit nothing in your conduct that dis-

tinguishes you from others, either as to piety or morality, take care that you do not pride yourselves on account of any imaginary, or worldly excellence. Do not look down with contempt or scorn, on those who are inferior to you in pecuniary circumstances. Do not treat the poor with haughtiness, or harden your hearts against their distresses. Do not be always looking for homage and adulation from your inferiors ; and do not consider yourselves insulted, when a want of respect is manifested towards you in their conduct.

Again, do not exalt yourselves above them in your own esteem. Take care that you do not value a friend, merely because he is rich, or despise and neglect another, merely because he is poor. Let not money be your criterion of respectability ; and never esteem a worthy acquaintance above a virtuous one.—Seek not to gain, or expect to meet with the applause of men, on account of any worldly pre-eminence. Never boast, either openly, or in covered terms, of your possessions, or of your family connections, in order to raise yourselves in the esteem of others. Do not decorate your persons, or study ornaments of dress, merely for the purpose of attracting the eyes of others, and exciting their admiration. Do not display your learning or your wit, or boast of your abilities and genius, merely with the view of gratifying your vanity. Guard against all these things, my brethren, with the nicest circumspection :

for they are all the offspring of pride. And if you have hitherto transgressed in any of them, set about a reform immediately, and assume the spirit of true Christian humility.

In fact, my brethren, what is to be gained by pride? The more you seek to gratify it, the more ardently you strive to gain praise and admiration, the less success will you meet with. The world, perverse and corrupt as it is, hates a proud and arrogant character, a vain and airy disposition. It will never give its esteem to those who hunger after it. The only character which the world, even with all its vices, venerates and extols, is the man who hates its caresses, and dreads its applauses,—the man, who wishes for no other approver of his conduct, but the great Searcher of hearts.—Be convinced of this, my brethren, and run no longer after a bubble, which you will never possess. Be not deceived with lies and vanity. Measure all things by the same measure, as you will do hereafter, when this world is taken from you; and endeavour to humble yourselves in this life, that you may be exalted in the next. Enter into the true spirit of piety and religion. Frequently consider that every thing you possess, whether riches, or endowments of mind or body, are gifts conferred on you by the Almighty, with a strict charge to put them to a good account. Consider God as the great Author of all, to whom alone glory and honour are due; and consider yourselves as merely tem-

porary possessors, with the severest threats held over your heads of being reduced to the lowest state of degradation and misery, if you assume glory to yourselves. Let this be the frequent subject of your thoughts, and regulate your conduct accordingly. In this manner, by the help of God's grace, you will be encouraged, and enabled to banish pride from your breasts, and to imbibe those sentiments of humility, which will make you acceptable in the sight of God, and cause you to be exalted hereafter, in those happy mansions, where alone exaltation is worthy of your ambition

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR BLESSED LADY.

ON DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS.

Mary hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her..... LUKE X.

ON this principal festival of the Blessed Virgin, the Church proposes to our consideration the example of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, as being particularly illustrative of the conduct of the Mother of God, during her sojournment in this world, and as being a model worthy of our imitation, in the arduous struggle in which we are engaged, with the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Mary, the Mother of God, truly chose the better part. She was always seated at the feet of her Lord, listening to his words, and profiting by his instructions. She kept all his words in her heart. By her correspondence with his commands, she became daily more and more full of grace, and attained to the utmost

state of perfection, to which it was possible for a created being to attain.—At length, the fullness of her time being come, she was, on this day, called from this place of exile, and escorted in triumph, by all the heavenly court, into the presence of her divine Son, and there put in possession of that better part, which shall never be taken from her.—Truly may we say, that this was a day of exultation and joy to all the court of heaven. With canticles of praise and thanksgiving was she welcomed into those blessed abodes. With love and benignity was she received by her divine Son, and placed above all the Angels and Saints, the nearest to himself.

What a consolation is it to us, my brethren, during our sojournment in this land of exile, to behold a fellow-creature, our own flesh, as it were, raised to such a supereminent degree of glory ! What an encouragement is it to us, to endeavour, as she did, to choose the better part, and to make our happiness, in this world, consist in preparing ourselves for a participation of the same glory which she now enjoys. Such a participation may be obtained. The path is open to us. She has set us the example : let us walk in her footsteps. The same God, who assisted her with his powerful graces, is ready to assist us. And moreover, she, being now seated near the throne of mercy, is ready to make intercession for us, and to lend her powerful aid to

obtain for us strength from above, and protection from our spiritual enemies.

That there is *a communion of Saints*, or an intellectual communication between the Saints in heaven, and the Faithful on earth, has always been the doctrine of the Church of God. In the Old Law, the Angels were considered as ministering spirits between the Almighty and his creatures, and not only ministering, but protecting and invoking spirits. *The angel*, said Jacob, (Gen. xlviii. 16.) *that delivereth me from all evil, will bless these boys. When thou didst pray, with tears*, said the angel Raphael to Tobias, (Tob. xii.) *and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord. . . . and now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sara, thy son's wife, from the devil.*—In the New Law, our Lord admonishes his disciples of the dreadful consequences of leading others into sin, by saying : *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones : for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven.* (Matt. xviii.) He moreover says, that *there shall be joy before the angels of God, over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety-nine just who need not repentance.* (Luke xv.) In the first text, he insinuates, that the angels will invoke the judgments of God upon the perverters of innocence ; and in the second he declares, that the

conversion of a sinner is a subject of joy to the whole court of heaven.—These two quotations are sufficient to show the interest which the blessed spirits before the throne of God take in our welfare. In fact, what other feeling but that of earnestness for our welfare, could they experience? Could a mother, or a dear relative or friend, when assumed into the kingdom of heaven, feel otherwise than solicitous about the surviving objects of their love, than that they should hereafter come into the same place of happiness? I will not pretend to say, that the blessed in heaven feel a solicitude, such as is felt by mortal man; for solicitude on earth is not compatible with that perfect serenity, which exists in heaven. But the solicitude which they may be supposed to feel, is that of joy, when they, who were dear to them on earth, are duly fulfilling the will of God, and preparing themselves for heaven, without being exposed to the feelings of sorrow, when they are running on in the ways of vice. For the will of God is their only rule, and is dearer to them than relatives, friends, or any thing beside.

You, my brethren, have always been convinced of the truth of this point of Catholic Doctrine. You have always believed that, altho' salvation is to be obtained solely through the merits of Christ, nevertheless, much is required of you, before those merits will be applied to

your souls. You have always been assured, that, although your heavenly Father knoweth what is necessary for you, and that he is solicitous for your salvation, beyond what can be expressed, his justice requires you to pray for yourselves, and that his mercy will graciously listen to the prayers of others in your behalf. You know, even from the dictates of reason alone, that the more pure or penitent you are, the easier will your prayers find access to him : and the more sanctified, and the more intimately united to him, are the intercessors in your favour, whether they are in heaven, or on earth, the more speedily will your wants be relieved. — Addressing myself, therefore, to you alone, I exhort you to have recourse to her, who is blessed above all the children of men. She is solicitous for your salvation, and she can plead your cause. Independently, indeed, of her Divine Son, who is your only Mediator, she can afford you no help. All good is to come from him. But she can plead your cause ; and, with such a pleader, what may you not obtain ? Her beloved Son refused her nothing, during the time that she was on earth : and can it be supposed that now, raised as she is above all the angels and saints, her petitions will be disregarded ? He yielded to her request at the marriage feast of Cana, and changed water into wine ; and can it be supposed that he will now turn a deaf ear to her petitions, and refuse that, which is of so

much greater importance, and which he has so much at heart, namely, the sanctifying and feeding your souls with heavenly graces? If you are encouraged to hope that, notwithstanding all your imperfections, and defilements, and rebellions, your prayers, when offered up with a contrite and humble heart, will find acceptance: what greater reason have you to hope that the Almighty will graciously attend to the prayers of her, who was never defiled with sin, who never was otherwise than most tenderly beloved by his Divine Son, and who is now honoured by him with the greatest honour that can be conferred on a mere human being? Truly, if your poor tepid prayers are found worthy to obtain a moderate supply of graces, her prayers, it may be presumed, will obtain grace a hundred-fold. If God was pleased to listen to the voice of his servant Job, after refusing to hear the prayers of his three friends, and to remit their sin, and receive them into favour at his request, (*Job. xlii.*) with what confidence may you not presume, that her prayers will obtain for you favours and graces, which, on account of your manifold sins, would not have been granted at your request!

Situated, then, as we are in this vale of tears, surrounded as we are with dangers on all sides, exposed as we are to enemies the most powerful, and the most determined, defiled as we are with sin, and unworthy as we are to find mercy and grace with God, let us apply with earnestness

to her, whose prayers will never be rejected. Let us beg of her to represent our wretchedness and misery to her Son, to lay before the Eternal Father the precious blood that he has shed for us, and to solicit, through his merits, the assistance of which we are in need. In what more respectful manner can we appear before the throne of mercy, than under the cover of her patronage? What more certain means of success can we adopt? How can we pay greater homage to the mediatorship of our Lord and Saviour?

This advice, however, is not to be understood as a dissuasive from applying personally to the throne of mercy.—We well know that our Lord said: *if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you*: (John xvi.) and that St. Paul exhorted his disciples, to *go with confidence to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*. (Heb. iv.) To God, therefore, you are to pray, and to pray with all earnestness, and, as the same apostle says, *without ceasing*. (1 Thess. v.) To God alone you are to pray. Your applications to the Blessed Virgin are for no other purpose than that she should secure your petitions. You know not what obstacles there may be to the success of your prayers, when presented by yourselves only. You know not what opposition there may be, in your dispositions, to the sanctity of the God, whom you address. You know not how many imperfections there may

be in your mode of addressing him. You know not how many reasons there may be, as in the case of the friends of Job, why he should refuse to grant your requests. Petitions are not granted merely because they are made. You may ask even for things necessary for salvation, and not obtain them ; because, as St. James says, you may *ask amiss*. (James iv.) How profitable, therefore, must it be, to have one to ask for you, who will not ask amiss, in whom there can be no obstacle to the success of her petition ?

Let us not, then, neglect the helps which are within our reach. In the arduous struggle in which we are engaged, we stand in need of every assistance: nothing that can promote our cause, ought to be considered trifling. We have many enemies engaged against us ; let us not refuse the assistance of friends. Our God will not be displeased at our enlisting his most special friends to act with us against his enemies. Let us, then, engage them on our side, and more particularly her, whose assumption into heaven we commemorate on this day.

But it must be remembered, that, neither our own prayers, nor the prayers of others in our behalf, will avail us, unless we endeavour to love and serve God. To solicit favours, and to continue obstinate in the ways of sin, is no better than a mockery. Such prayers will not be heard, unless it be to draw down heavier judgments on our guilty souls. In the same

manner, to solicit the Mother of God, or any of the angels and saints in heaven, to pray for us, at the time that we are in actual rebellion against their Lord, without any feeling of sorrow, or desire of amendment, would be of no avail whatever. For, what could they petition for? That mercy should be shown to us, at the time that we are daily making ourselves more and more unworthy of it? That the Lord of glory should have no regard to his honour and justice, but should clasp us in his arms as friends, at the time that we are crucifying him again, as much as in us lay? Or, that he should offer violence to us, and force us against our will, to be obedient to his laws? No: such petitions as these will never be presented to the God of holiness, by his dearest friends. Although they are tenderly affected towards us, they are more dearly attached to him; and they will never attempt to favour us, at his expense. No: before we can obtain the benefit of the intercession of the Mother of God, or of her associates in happiness, it is expected that we should take off our affections from sin, that we repent of our past sins, or, at least, that we be desirous of entering on a course of repentance. It is expected that we entertain a desire of serving and loving God for the time to come; and that we be in dispositions, to devote the remainder of our lives to the sanctification of our souls. Provided that this be our state of mind, we may rely on her support.

She will intercede with her Divine Son, our great Mediator and Redeemer. She will obtain more special graces, than would be granted to our unworthy prayers; and she will be truly a mother to us.

Let it be your endeavour, therefore, to divest yourselves of the leaven of corruption, and to renounce the former error of your ways. What has the world, or the gratification of your passions, hitherto profited you? or what will they profit you for the time to come? They will all *pass away like a shadow, or like a post that runneth on, of whom the trace is not found.* Place the example of the Blessed Virgin before your eyes, and strive to walk in her footsteps. *She chose the better part, and it shall never be taken from her.* Do you choose the *better part*, in like manner; and you will find that *it is good to you, beyond thousands of gold and silver.* (Ps. cxviii. 72.)

We may truly say, that it will never be granted to you, to love and serve God so perfectly as she did: but you may, nevertheless, endeavour to put to profit all the graces that you receive, and strive to serve him in the best manner you can. It is possible for you to follow, although at a distance, the fervour and constancy which she possessed, and be found worthy to be counted among the number of the children of God, and to find that your lot is among the saints. Endeavour, therefore, to imitate her purity, her temperance, her pru-

dence. You may have more violent temptations to transgress in these things, than what she had. But look up to her example : and consider that the same God who enabled her to practise these virtues in their utmost perfection, is ready to afford you a helping hand to practise them likewise.—Endeavour to imitate her patience, her meekness, her resignation to the will of God. You will not have such sorrows, such severe trials to submit to, as what she had: a sword will never pierce your souls, as it did hers. (*Luke ii.*) And by whose assistance was it, that she was meek and resigned? The same God who assisted her, will assist you, likewise, to make the evils of this life contribute to your eternal good.—She loved her neighbour as herself: she forgave all injuries: she returned good for evil, and overcame evil with good. You have the same means of practising these Christian virtues as she had: and to whom is the fault to be attributed, if you do not practise them?—She walked constantly in the presence of God; was always attentive to his inspirations; endeavoured to please him in all her thoughts, words, and actions; and laboured incessantly to make herself deserving of the crown of glory, which was prepared for her. The same God, who was constantly with her, is constantly with you; the same attention to sanctify the ordinary actions of the day, will be as profitable to you, as it was to her: and if you labour as per-

severingly to prepare your souls for an eternal weight of glory as she did, you will find that there is a *just Judge, who will reward every one according to his works.* (Rom. ii.)—She walked in the paths of humility, notwithstanding all the wonderful things that God had wrought in her favour. She was blessed above all women; and she reckoned herself as no better than *the handmaid of the Lord.* (Luke i.) Strive to imitate this divine virtue. Humility is the foundation of every Christian virtue. Humility is the rock, upon which every soul ought to be seated; and from which, when once firmly established thereon, no power either on earth, or in hell, shall ever remove her without her own free consent. Humility raised the blessed Virgin to her present exalted state: and humility it is, that is to exalt you to the state prepared for you in heaven. In fact, what can be more reasonable? What did she, or any of the saints possess, as of their own? And what do we, or what can we possess, which we have not received from the hands of God? And *if we have received, why should we glory, as if we had not received?* (1 Cor. iv. 7.)

Endeavour in this manner to walk in the footsteps of the blessed Virgin. By imitating her virtues, you will most assuredly obtain the benefit of her intercession. The saints who are gone before, even the most eminent who have adorned the Church, from the first age down to the present time, were particularly devoted to

these pious exercises. They looked up to her as the model of every virtue, and endeavoured to regulate their lives according to her example. They experienced the benefits arising from it, and attributed to her intercession, many of the choicest blessings which they received. They strongly recommended to all Christians to do the same, and to place themselves under her special protection, as the most effectual means of obtaining every thing that was necessary for their advancement in virtue.

Listen, therefore, to their remonstrances, and follow their example. You may gain much, and you can lose nothing, by so doing. It has been remarked that, the more devout a Christian has been, during the course of his mortal life, to the Mother of God, the more eminent has been his sanctity. Imitate this devotion, in hopes that your piety to God, and your love of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, may be similar to theirs. Then, you will *have chosen the better part*: and, if you persevere to the end, you may depend upon it, that *it will never be taken from you*.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE GRACE OF GOD.

*By the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace in me
hath not been void.....1 COR. xv. 10.*

IN the words of my text, the great Apostle of the Gentiles acknowledges, that all his wonderful perfections, and eminent virtues, are the work of divine grace; and that the only merit due to him, was a co-operation, by which his grace was not made void.—This acknowledgment, my brethren, ought to inspire us with sentiments of perfect confidence in the mercies and power of God, and encourage us to proceed with alacrity in the great business of salvation. What was St. Paul, before his conversion? A fiery zealot—a blind Pharisee—an envenomed persecutor of the Church of Christ. He was a man, whose dispositions were the farthest removed from that humility, simplicity, and meekness, which are the distinguishing features of a true Chris-

tian.—In a moment, the most wonderful change was wrought in him. He became an eminent model of all Christian virtues, a strenuous supporter of the Church of Christ, a shining light in the house of God. This change was the work of the right-hand of the Most High. In St. Paul, no other exertion was required, than to correspond with the grace which was infused into his soul. This he faithfully attended to ; and willing to ascribe the glory to him, to whom alone it was due, he exclaimed, in the words of my text : *By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been void.*

What cause have we not here, my brethren, for encouragement and confidence ! We, like St. Paul, are dependant on the grace of God. Of ourselves, we can do nothing towards our salvation. What we have hitherto done, has not been by our own strength, but by the efficacy of the grace of God : by this grace it is, that we are what we are. By the efficacy of this same grace it is, that every thing is to be done, which we shall do hereafter. Now, as the grace of God is all-powerful, and as this grace is never refused to any one who sincerely applies for it, difficulties ought not to discourage us, nor the multiplicity of duties to dishearten us ; dangers ought not to terrify us, nor the dread of future punishments to fill us with alarm. We have only to ask for grace in a proper manner, and it will be given to us :

and nothing can make this grace void in us, but the want of sincerity and correspondence on our parts. I will present to your consideration a few reflections on this interesting subject.

When we reflect on the multiplicity of the duties prescribed by the Gospel, and read that important sentence, that every one of them is to be fulfilled to a tittle :—when we consider, that every one is to be judged according to his works, and that the sentence of condemnation will be passed on him who has transgressed in any material point, against these moral and divine precepts ; or who, having transgressed, has not brought forth worthy fruits of repentance :—again, when we examine, more in detail, the duties prescribed by the commandments, the obligations of self-denial, the necessity of taking off our affections from the things of the world, and having our conversation in heaven : in a word, of keeping all our passions in subjection, and becoming meek and humble of heart, like our divine Redeemer himself: when, I say, we reflect on all these, what reasons have we not to tremble ?—When, again, we reflect on the weakness of human nature, and the indefatigable exertions of our powerful enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, to lead us into sin ;—when we look around, and behold almost all mankind transgressing against these commands, and living in the open violation of them, as if such commands had never been given, or as if the obligation of observing them

had never been imposed, oh ! what a terrifying prospect is presented before us ! or rather, what a terrifying prospect would be presented before us, were we not assured, as I observed before, that the grace of God is all-sufficient; that this grace may be obtained by prayer ; and that, consequently, ample and abundant means are within our reach, by which we may be enabled to fulfil every command, and to separate ourselves from that immense multitude, who are walking in the broad road, and whose example is so alluring, so dangerous. Yes : without this assurance, the prospect would be alarming: but with this assurance, the terrors are expelled, and a strong incitement is given, to apply earnestly to the throne of mercy, for strength to correspond with the grace which God is ever ready to impart to us.

Happy would it be, if this great truth were duly impressed on the minds of all. But, my brethren, how many are there, who give themselves very little time to reflect, either on the multiplicity of their duties, or of the grace that is necessary for the fulfilment of them ! how many, who, although they appear to lead regular lives, make the whole of their religion consist in a routine of certain spiritual exercises, a few daily prayers, and a regular attendance at the public service of the Church on Sundays. Of these it may be said, that they serve God more through the influence of habit, than through motives of love : and being satis-

fied in their own mind, and perhaps priding themselves on the idea, that they *are not like the rest of men, adulterers, extortioners, &c.* they see no necessity of applying to God for special graces, and consequently spend their lives in a state of lukewarmness, and never acquire a knowledge either of their duties, or of the spirit of piety and religion.—There are others, and it is to these that my subject is particularly applicable, who are not ignorant of the duties of religion, nor of the necessity of divine grace, but who feel a certain timidity; and being, perhaps, too much enamoured of the world, or tyrannized over by one or more of the passions of depraved nature, are terrified when they hear the multifarious commands of God, and foolishly think, that more is required of them than they can possibly perform. Influenced by these fears, they are deterred from entering seriously upon the great work, and suffer their whole lives to elapse, without making a single effort to save their souls.

But, my brethren, these alarms are unfounded. Weak as human nature is, and great as are the duties required of you, the grace of God is all-sufficient, and that grace is at your command. It is provided in ample abundance for every individual amongst you, and is offered to every one who seriously applies for it, and is disposed to put it to profit by a ready correspondence. Not one amongst you is necessitated on any occasion to commit sin, or criminally to neglect

any essential duty. You all possess free-will, and you may all possess grace. Grace is promised you, if you apply for it, and by means of that grace, you may exercise your free-will in such a manner, as to practise every duty which the gospel enjoins.

This has always been the economy of divine Providence ; and it may be said, with truth, that there is not a single soul in hell, but who might have escaped the dreadful sentence of condemnation, had he pleased : that there is not one, but who might have lived a good life, and died a good death, had he chosen to apply seriously for, and have corresponded with the grace, which God was ready to impart to him, during the days of his mortality. The damned in hell, have no one to blame but themselves. Their great delight was to gratify their passions ; their chief solicitude, was to advance themselves in the world. The things of God, and the welfare of their souls, were only secondary considerations ; and as their treasure was not God, their hearts were not with him. In this state they lived, and in this state they died. Do you, my brethren, *seek the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth* ; (Col. iii.) do you desire, and endeavour to emancipate yourselves from the slavery of your passions, and to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God ; do you endeavour to fix your hearts on that treasure, which you hope to be your treasure hereafter ; do you seriously strive to wean

your affections from earthly things, and to fix them on Him who alone is worthy of them, and you will find that grace will be given to you, to keep all the commands of God, to lead virtuous lives, and to ensure to yourselves, the possession of the kingdom of heaven.

I do not pretend to say, that more abundant graces are not given to some, than to others. Some people are selected by God, to be the ministers of his greatest works. Such were the blessed Virgin, the apostles, and the like. To these, grace was imparted above measure. Others, again, are appointed to extraordinary commissions. Such have been the Pastors of the Church in all ages. Such, likewise, are those who are placed in civil authority over others. To these, special graces have been, and are given, according to the nature and the importance of the duty entrusted to them. But, as the task of saving our souls is a distant task, as it were, from these extraordinary commissions, and as this task is imposed on every individual, and is as difficult to be performed by one as by another, at least when considered in general terms, sufficient grace is given to all for the accomplishment of it. Superabundant grace is given to those, who are to perform superabundant works : but for the purpose of sanctifying our souls, without reference to extraordinary works, grace is given to one as well as to another.

A question will here naturally suggest itself

to your minds: "If sufficient grace be given to all, how comes it, that some feel it more difficult to overcome temptation than others? how comes it that so small a proportion of the Christian world is animated with the true spirit of piety? Does not universal experience prove, that the person who is retired from the world, or who, living in the world, has chosen the better part, feels infinitely less difficulty in performing his duties, than the man, who is exposed to all the dangers and temptations which are to be met with in the world?" This reasoning is very just: but it is not to the point. When I said that sufficient grace was given to all, I did not say, that as much grace was given to one as to another, or that it was as easy for one to co-operate with that grace, as for another. In the state of innocence, perhaps, there may be a perfect equality in this respect. But no sooner has a sinner forfeited his innocence, than the consequences are felt. He experiences within himself less inclination to do good, and more violent temptations to do evil. The grace of God, likewise, is diminished. If he continue on in the career of vice, these effects are felt in ten-fold proportion, and the grace of God is diminished in like manner. Nevertheless, a sufficiency of grace is never refused, and the declaration of the Almighty always stands good: *at whatever hour the sinner returns to me, I will receive him.*—But, on the other hand, if a man retain his innocence, then the spiritual

powers of his soul will be strengthened, and the grace of God will be encreased. If he still continue faithful, the violence of temptation will diminish, and the ways of piety will appear more and more pleasing.—Therefore, although we say, that grace is given to all, yet we do not say, that it is equally easy for all to correspond with that grace. No: the sinner feels far greater difficulty in fulfilling his duties, than the man whose soul is animated with the love of God: and still it may be said, with truth, that sufficient grace is given to all.

Again, it will not be right to say, that every man is tempted alike, or that all kinds of temptation may be as easily overcome by one as by another, even on the supposition that they have equal portions of grace. In cases of this kind, much depends on the dispositions of the individuals. One feels a violent propensity to the vice of avarice, another to the vice of pride, another to the vice of impurity, another to the vice of intemperance, another to anger, and so on. We can all of us resist those temptations, which are not in unison with our predominant passion, with less difficulty, and consequently, with less grace, than he can, whose predominant passion it is. But if one passion is not predominant in us, another is. We have all our peculiar enemy to deal with; and we must all have our peculiar mode of warfare, according to the character of that enemy. The goodness of God, however, is not wanting in these

cases. To whatever point a man's passions may be turned, grace is given to him accordingly. Where grace is particularly wanted, there grace is particularly given.

But, it may be asked again, supposing that there were two individuals, who by nature were equally prone to the gratification of the same passion, can it be said that they will always find equal difficulty in resisting it? In reply it may be said, that in the beginning, before they had gratified that passion, the difficulty was equal, provided that both had received the same benefits of instruction, and the same parental care. God does not favour one more than another, except it is, that one has given proof of his fidelity more than another, or when he sets apart an individual, for the performance of some extraordinary work. In the beginning of the combat, we have all, generally speaking, equal power of resisting the enemy: and if, from the beginning of the combat, we had all shown equal firmness in resisting the enemy, we should all continue to possess equal power over him. But the man who once yields to him, diminishes his power of resistance, and increases the power of attack in his enemy. The more frequently this happens, the more sensibly is the effect perceived.——Is it, then, to be wondered at, that such a man finds greater difficulty in resisting temptation, than the man, who has never suffered his powers of resistance to be impaired by a base submission to his

enemy? Is it to be wondered at, that a defeated army is less capable of making a stand, than the army which is flushed with repeated victories, and in full pursuit of its foes? By no means. And is the fault to be attributed to God? His weakness arises solely from his infidelities: and consequently, the difficulties he experiences, arise, not from the want of grace in the beginning, but from the gratified corruption of his own heart.

These are the reasons, why some, more easily than others, resist temptations to which they are, by nature, equally inclined. If there are any here present, who have fallen in this manner, and who seem to think that the grace of God is withdrawn from them, let me exhort them to enter seriously into themselves, and I assure them that they will find, that the grace of God will not be wanting. Difficulties, undoubtedly, they will experience. But the first victory will cost them the most. Let them begin seriously to correspond with the grace of God, and persevere in their endeavours, and they will soon experience that their strength is encreasing, and that the powers of their enemy are on the decline. Let them enter seriously into sentiments of repentance, and they will soon discover, that they can resist temptation with as much ease, as those of whom I have been speaking.—*Watch and pray*, is a repeated admonition of our Lord. Grace is offered to us, to enable us to watch and pray: and if we

make use of this grace, and watch and pray as we ought, we shall have it in our power, at all times, to resist our enemy, although *he goeth about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Pet. v.)

This, my brethren, is the doctrine of the Spirit of God : this is the economy of divine Providence : this is the fatherly love which the Almighty exhibits towards every one of his children. See that you profit by it in a due manner. If you have hitherto faithfully observed the commands of God, if you have duly attended to all your spiritual duties, if you have preserved your innocence undefiled, if your affections have been, and are disengaged from the things of the world, and your love centered in Him, who alone is worthy of it; or if, having been drawn aside into the ways of vice, you have renounced your errors, and are endeavouring to bring forth worthy fruits of repentance, then you may reasonably flatter yourselves that you have done much, and that you will henceforward, unless you wilfully return to your former ways, correspond with the grace that is given to you : then you may say, in the words of my text: *by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not, and I hope will not, for the time to come, be made void.*— But if, on the contrary, you are conscious that sin aboundeth in you; if you are obliged to give testimony against yourselves, and to acknowledge that all is not right with

you, that you frequently indulge your sensual inclinations, that you give way to anger, to drunkenness, to lust, or to any other excess, that you seek your enjoyment here, and do little, comparatively speaking, to please God, and to prepare yourselves for happiness hereafter, then you may truly say, that you have not corresponded with the grace of God, that by neglecting it, you are what you are, and that it has been made void in you. And if this way of life is to continue, what is to be looked for? No other, than that you will fall still deeper and deeper into the abyss of wickedness; that the influence of grace will become weaker and weaker; that the power of your spiritual enemies will encrease, and that at length your conscience will become *seared*, as the apostle expresses it; and prepared for the dreadful sentence of reprobation. Oh! how dreadful is this prospect to the unrepenting sinner! May it never be presented before any of you. Think, therefore, whilst you have time, and correct the error of your ways.

You, who have hitherto been faithful, or who have sincerely repented of your faults, give glory to God, for to him alone it is due. By his grace, *you are what you are*. Proceed with fear and trembling. Trust not to your own strength, nor flatter yourselves that you are sure of persevering to the end, merely because you seem to stand firm at the present moment. Who was more wise, or more convinced of the

vanity of all earthly things, or more favoured by God, than Solomon was? And yet he fell, and, for ought we know, never rose again. Be convinced that you cannot have so much as one good thought, that would be profitable to salvation, without the grace of God. Be earnest in prayer, and persevere in your applications to the throne of mercy, that you may correspond with grace more and more faithfully : and encourage yourselves with the pleasing confidence, that God will listen to your prayers, and that nothing will be wanting on his part.

But you, whose conduct has been the reverse of this, oh ! think whilst you have time. The mercies of God are still at your command. His grace is still offered to you. Although you have hitherto abused it, yet the Lord is long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy. Turn, then, to him with your whole hearts. He is even now inviting you to return to his embraces. Your own conscience reproves you for your excesses : the interior inspirations of heaven, cause you to feel a disgust for vice, and a secret love for virtue. The ministers of God admonish you of your failings, and press you to forsake the husks of swine, and return to your Father's house. What more can be done for you ? Oh ! if all this be not sufficient to deter you from any longer abusing the mercies of your God, and neglecting his graces, you may reasonably expect that the heaviest of his judg-

ments will, ere long, fall on your heads. But, if you begin to enter seriously into yourselves, by sentiments of repentance and amendment, then his graces will work in you abundantly beyond measure. By degrees you will be freed from the bondage of corruption : and you will be preparing yourselves for the possession of that crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to you at the last day, the day of retribution, *when every one shall be rewarded according to his works.* (Rom. ii.)

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON WORKS OF CHARITY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

Which of these three was neighbour to him ? But he said: He that shewed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him : Go, and do thou in like manner. LUKE x. 36, 37.

THE parable, my brethren, which forms a part of the Gospel of this Sunday, was spoken by our Lord, as an illustrative explanation of that great commandment of the law : "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Who is my neighbour ? said the Lawyer ; and our Lord adduced the example of a man relieving, in the most compassionate manner, a stranger in distress, although of another nation and religion.

A fund of instruction is contained in this explanatory parable. I shall make it the subject of this discourse ; and I doubt not but that every individual in this assembly, will hear several remarks that are justly applicable to himself. The subject is copious, and I have only

to regret, that the brevity necessarily to be observed in a discourse, will not allow me to enlarge upon it to its full extent.

Before I enter upon the subject, it will be proper to state, that the Lawyer applied to our Lord for instructions, how he was to save his soul : *Master, what must I do, to possess eternal life ?* Our Lord, in reply, spoke this parable, and in conclusion gave this command : *Go, and do thou in like manner.* From which I deduce the following argument : our Lord pointed out to the Lawyer the line of conduct which he ought to pursue towards his neighbour ; not as a matter of counsel, in order to attain to greater perfection, but as a matter of obligation, on which his salvation depended : *What shall I do, to possess eternal life ? Go, and do thou in like manner.* As the good Samaritan had acted, so was he to act, in order to possess eternal life. Bear this in mind during this discourse, and you will then see, that the advice that I shall give, is not what may not be followed, according as each one may think fit; but that it is a description of the commands of God, on the due fulfilment of which salvation depends.

As long as we remain in this world, we are beings dependant, in a certain degree, one upon another. The most wealthy, as well as the most abject, are subjected to this state. No one is exempt. The most mighty monarch on his throne, is dependant on others of his fellow-creatures, both for the support of

his dignity, and for the sustenance of his body. Of himself, or if he were left to himself, he would sink to a level, or even below the level of the rest of mankind. What would be his kingly authority, if there were none that acknowledged it, or submitted to it? And what would riches and possessions avail him, unaccustomed as he is to toil and labour, if there were none to till the ground, for the purpose of producing what was necessary for the support of his body? The most exalted, therefore, as well as the most abject, are in a state of dependance on their fellow-creatures. I say this, not to depreciate the higher ranks of society in the minds of the lower, but to induce the higher order to attend to the necessities of those, who are dependant on all; and who have no other means of subsistence, besides those which charity provides.

The state, however, in which society is, and has always been, renders this dependance on one another no ways burthensome or painful to the rich and powerful. On the contrary, it too often occasions their minds to swell with pride, and adds fuel to the most turbulent and restless passions which disgrace human nature.—The dependance which is painful, is that of the poor upon the rich. The poor are dependant upon the rich for the means of subsistence, and they have no equivalent to offer, as an inducement to them to impart those means, except the internal consolations, which charity and huma-

nity usually instil into the minds of the benevolent : and consequently, from those, who are hardened by nature, and whose love of money causes them to steel their hearts against consolations of this kind, they have little to expect but humiliations and denials. Such was the case of Lazarus. The rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day, refused him even the crumbs that fell from his table. And although the very dogs seemed to feel compassion for his distresses, and came and licked his sores, yet his heart was callous to the sufferings of the destitute, and his attention was solely taken up in the enjoyment of his own pleasures. In this respect, the poor are placed upon an inequality. The rich can always obtain what they want for the gratification of their pleasures, because they can always give such an equivalent as the world is glad to receive. The poor have no such equivalent to give, and therefore, too frequently, do not receive what they want.

Now, that one part of the human race should not be treated with scorn and neglect by the other, merely on account of their possessing but little of the things of this world, religion comes forward in favour of the poor; and holds out to the rich a reward of charity, of far greater value than the equivalent, which they have to give to those from whom they receive their means of support. They receive goods and services from

the lower orders, and they give money in return. But when they give charity to the poor, our Lord engages to give them in return, an eternal weight of glory in heaven.—Ah! if the rich were animated with the true spirit of piety and religion, they would see that there is something more in poverty, than what they had hitherto discovered. They would see, that the poor held a place of distinguished eminence in the order of Divine Providence: they would see, that the poor were the dispensers, or the causes of the dispensation of the most invaluable blessings: they would see that the poor, although of little service to them in this world, may be very serviceable to them in their preparation for the next: they would see that money given to the mechanic, tradesman, or farmer, would procure for them only perishable things, and that money given to the poor, would purchase for them treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can consume, nor thieves break in and steal.—Were they, I say, animated with the true spirit of piety, they would discover these and many other inducements to works of charity. Mere humanity, without being animated by the spirit of religion, has done wonderful things in favour of the poor. But were the spirit of piety united with these noble, generous feelings, how much more extensive and beneficial would be the effects! Ah! let us not then, despise the poor: let us not consider them as supernumeraries, and as

burdens on the wealthy and prosperous classes : let us rather treat them with a certain kind of respect : let us admit them to the rank which they are intended to hold in the scale of created beings : and let us look to them as men, upon whom we are dependant for the inestimable blessings which are to be purchased by charity.

Let it, however, be understood, that, by *Poor*, I do not mean the strolling vagrants, who go from door to door, supplicating relief, merely because they are too idle to work ; although charity bestowed on them, if it be given through motives of charity, will not lose its reward. But I mean the real poor, whose industry cannot supply their wants ; whose hearts are good, but who, for various reasons, cannot procure a sufficiency for their subsistence. The poor of this description, are seldom seen at the door. Sometimes, indeed, impelled by the feelings of hunger, and the cries of their starving offspring, they will state their necessities, and solicit relief : but, even then, they are easily to be distinguished from those, who make a trade of begging, and who seek no other means of gaining a maintenance. In general it may be remarked of them, that they rather conceal than display their wretchedness, that they break the scanty morsel to their children, and weep in silence over their affliction ; that they lift up their supplicating hands to heaven, and implore aid from Him who feeds the birds of the air,

and clothes the lilies of the field ; and that, when succours are administered to them by the hand of charity, they invoke the choicest blessings of the Almighty upon their benefactors. These are the poor, of whom I speak. I have no doubt but that every one of you is, or may be, acquainted with poor of this description. If you are not, many of your friends are, and particularly your Pastor, whose heart would rejoice where he requested, either to conduct you to their cheerless hearth, or to be the dispenser of your pious charities.

I do not apply my remark merely to the poor of your own communion. Charity ought to have no limits : it ought to extend to all : the errors of education, or prejudice, or even of wilful corruption, ought not to impede its influence. Whether the object be a member of the one true church, or whether he belong to any of the numerous congregations that are separated from it, or whether he be no Christian at all, provided he be a real object of distress, charity ought to be ready to relieve him. This is particularly exemplified in the parable of this Sunday, which is proposed for your imitation.

A particular attention, however, may and ought to be paid to the wants of those who are our brethren in Christ. *Let us do good to all men, says St. Paul, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith.* (Gal. vi.) Although, therefore, it is good and profitable in the sight of God, to administer relief to all who

are in distress, whether they are of the household of the faith, or not, whether they are persons of irreproachable character, or not, yet it is recommended to be more abundant in your alms to your own brethren. And if it should be, that your means were such that you could only bestow a little, and that you had applications from members both of your own communion, and of others, from people of bad, as well as of good character, then the words of the apostle point out that you should prefer your own brother in Christ, before a stranger, that you should prefer relieving a virtuous person before one, who, by his excesses, had brought poverty and distress upon himself.

Seeing, then, that the poor are of such consequence in the scale of human beings, seeing that, so far from being supernumeraries, as it were, and burthens upon the public, they are presented before you by Providence, as channels through which the choicest blessings are to flow into your souls, exalt them to that place in your esteem, which is their due. Banish far from you that haughty sullen contempt, which is too often displayed by the higher classes, in the presence of the poor. Look upon them as your brethren, and treat them as you would treat those, who could and would return you an hundred-fold for your services to them. Our Lord has said: *It is a more blessed thing to give, than to receive.* (Acts xx.) Consider these words as applicable to the present subject. It is a

more blessed thing to give charity to the poor, when an encrease of happiness for eternity is to be the reward, than it is for the poor to receive a small pittance, which is to relieve their wants only for a time.

Oh! these are powerful inducements indeed to works of charity. Add to these the motives, which our Lord himself proposes to you. He declares that the poor are particularly dear to him. He was poor himself: and he was poor for the purpose of convincing us that poverty was no disgrace, and that it was not of itself an evil. If, then, the poor are dear to him, and if he was pleased to be poor himself, shall we turn away with disdain from those of our fellow-creatures who are in that state? Shall we proudly exalt ourselves, because we are removed from that state.—Our Lord declares, that what we do to the poor, he considers as done to himself. Could we refuse to administer to the wants of our blessed Lord, were we to see him exposed to hunger, cold, and nakedness, with not a place whereon to lay his head? Certainly we should not. And what would be our motive for giving him relief? Would it be, that we looked up to him as the Master of all that we possessed, and that we should not dare to refuse him? or would it be, that our love and veneration for him, would cause us to feel a pleasure—a happiness in contributing to relieve his corporal wants? or would it be, that the hope of finding favour with him, and ob-

taining a title to an eternal reward, influenced our actions? Which of these would be our motive? That we should most freely administer to him, is undoubted: and either one or all of these motives conjointly would be our inducement. Now, as our Lord expressly declares, that he presents himself to us in the persons of the poor, and assures us, that what we do to them, he considers as done to himself, we have the same motives, and ought to feel the same inducements to relieve their wants, as we should to relieve those of our Lord himself, were he personally present. We give to him, from what we have received, all that we possess. We show forth our love and veneration for him, in the manner that he has particularly recommended: and we are laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven; for even a cup of cold water, given in charity, shall not lose its reward. (*Matt. x.*)

What could we wish for more? What greater inducements could we have for the performance of works of charity? Ah! if these are not sufficient, it is a sign, not that they are devoid of weight, but that we do not sufficiently consider them; that we are chiefly anxious for temporal things, and for the gratification of our own ambition and self-love: that we do not see things with the eyes of faith: that we do not love our neighbour, in God, and for God; and that we do not follow the precept of the Lord,

which is delivered to us in the parable of this Sunday.

Alas ! how many are there, particularly in this kingdom, who with fewer inducements, are not wanting in the duties of charity. How many, who, actuated merely by the feelings of compassion, which nature, without the aid of religion, has implanted in their breasts, visit the sick, explore the habitations of the destitute, and relieve abundantly, where relief appears to be wanting ! How many are there, who, actuated merely by the impulse of pride and ostentation, subscribe their names to every list of charitable donations, and, in the course of the year, disburse very considerable sums for the relief of the distressed whom they never saw, and for whom they have little or no regard ! If, then, human motives can exercise such an influence over the minds of the worldly inclined, and can draw from the purses even of the lovers of mammon, such large contributions in favour of the distressed, how great ought to be the influence which religious motives ought to exercise over the minds of the avowed followers of the poor and humble Jesus ! Shall it be said, that the lovers of the world give abundant alms, without a prospect of a reward hereafter, (for they whose charity is elicited merely thro' human motives, have already received their reward, (*Matt. vi.*), and that the children of light, before whom is expanded the prospect of

an eternal recompense, be sparing and tardy in their good offices to their afflicted brethren? Oh! fix your eyes on Jesus: imagine to yourselves, that it is he who solicits your benevolent aid, and give way to the emotions of love, which that idea will excite. With this thought in your minds, I am convinced that not one of you would turn away from an object, who appears to be an object of charity. Encourage the thought, therefore, and meditate upon it. Consider, that your Jesus, in the persons of the poor, humbles himself at your feet, and looks up to you for something for his support.

Self-love will not fail to suggest various reasons why you should not be *too liberal* in your alms, for by that name it will designate the frequent repetition of works of charity. But when we consider that multitudes, in very ample circumstances, have sold all that they had, and given it to the poor; that our Lord approved of such conduct, and declared it to be a means of attaining to perfection, and that, in the first age of the Church, it was generally followed, as the inspired Epistles testify, how little ought these suggestions of self-love to weigh on your minds. You are not, indeed, asked, in these times, to sell all you have. Give only your superfluities, and you will probably give much more than you have hitherto given. Were we allowed to examine, and to make extracts from the great book of life, in which are recorded all the actions of every individual of the human

race, we should, in all probability, be able to prove that there is hardly one, who does not squander away, unnecessarily, more money than he bestows in charity. The lower classes have certainly very little superfluous cash. But who is there amongst them, that does not spend more money in unnecessary things, or, to speak more plainly, in public houses, than he does in relieving the distressed ? I wish not to be too severe. But, as a Christian Pastor, and a minister of the Father of the poor, I think it nothing but reasonable to say, that it would be more profitable for their bodies, as well as their souls, were they to make an equal division, and allot as much to the poor, as they do to their own sensual gratification.—As to those in easier circumstances, I fear the book of life would be still more unfavourable. They, perhaps, may give to the poor to a larger amount, than those of whom I have been speaking. But, when we consider their superfluous expenditure, and when we consider their means, may it not be said, that their charity is confined within much narrower limits ? What will the book of life declare concerning the sums of money which are spent in unnecessary things ? How many pounds, will it say, have been spent during the year, taking one year with another, in the vanities of fashionable dress, in plays, balls, amusements, and trifles of one description or another, and which, in part at least, with very great credit to themselves,

and without diminishing one iota of the consequence that they imagine they possess, might have been devoted to giving bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothing to the naked? In opposition to this expenditure during the year, what is the amount of the sum which charity has gained from them? Will it amount to a single tithe? It would be a profitable task, were you to enter into a calculation of these different expenditures. They are both recorded in the book of life, and much will depend on the difference between them. I do not mean to say, that young people are to be restrained from every amusement, or that they appear in a dress unsuited to their state in life; nor am I to be abashed by those young people, strangers to the spirit of the gospel, who may rebuke me, for preaching up a way of life which is contrary to the ways of the present times. As a minister of the gospel, it is my duty to preach the doctrines of my Lord and Master; and however severe may be my condemnation of the ways of the present times, or, in other words, the ways of the world, it will not be more severe than what he himself has delivered.

There are many, who do not spend much in superfluous things, and yet, with means in their hands, give but little to the distressed. These are of a different class from the above, and the reasons why they give but little to the poor, are of a different kind. They say that

they have a family to provide for, and that they must lay by something for them after they are gone. This reason is certainly praiseworthy, and what every parent ought to attend to. But, when a parent seeks to exalt his children, and his ambition for their advancement is carried so far as to exclude charity, it is carried much beyond its due limits. Besides, ought not a father to lay by something for himself, in another world? Is it incumbent on him to give all his hard earnings to his children, and reserve nothing to himself? Ought he not, rather, so to *make use of the mammon of this world, that when these shall fail, they may receive him into everlasting dwellings?*—Again, is it to be supposed, that the money, which is given in charity, is lost to the family, even in this world? Has not our Lord promised, that he will give it back a hundred-fold? Is it not by charity that blessings are to be obtained for yourselves and families? Can it be supposed, that the Lord will favour you the less, on account of the greater attention that you pay to him? O my deluded brethren, your amassing riches, and laying up treasures for your children, does not depend wholly upon your own endeavours. God is the giver of all good things. To him you must look up: and depend upon it, there is not a more efficacious means of obtaining the object of your wishes, than administering to the wants of your poor brethren. You will thus be laying up treasures for yourselves, and draw-

ing down blessings upon those who are to survive you.

Oh! give not heed, then, to any of these unfounded excuses. Be charitable to the poor, for the love of Jesus. Your charity will be much more profitable to you, than to those whom you relieve. To them it will be merely temporary : to you it will be eternal. Respect your poor brethren in Christ. They are your fellow-members. Although they are below you, although they are the feet, as it were, of that great mystical body, of which you are members, and of which Christ is the head, be not unmindful, that it is by the means of these feet that you are to walk to heaven. Have a feeling for them, therefore, and relieve their wants. If you are not acquainted with any, whom you consider as real objects, consult him, whose duty it is to be a father to them all, who is generally a partaker in the distresses of all in distress, and he will point them out to you. Be attentive in this, and you will be laying up treasures to yourselves in heaven. You will then be acting the part of the good Samaritan, and your reward will be exceeding great, even the possession of a crown of inexpressible glory in the regions of never-fading bliss.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON SINCERITY IN PRAYER.

There met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us..... LUKE xvii. 12, 13.

AN interesting subject, my brethren, is presented to our consideration in the gospel of this Sunday. Ten men, who were afflicted with the leprosy, standing afar off, besought our Lord to be relieved by him from their corporal disease. The fervency of their prayer found instant acceptance, and they were immediately dismissed to the priests, with an assurance that their petition was granted.

The disease of leprosy was always considered as emblematical of sin. With this leprosy we ourselves are affected, some in a less, some in a greater degree. The disease is growing upon us; and, unless a speedy remedy be applied, we have too much reason to fear that it will be fatal, and hurry us on to the gates even of eternal death. It is our duty, there-

fore, like the lepers, to apply to our Lord for relief. He did not turn away his ear from them, neither will he from us.

But, we must remember, that the success of our petitions will depend on our sincerity. We must earnestly desire to be cured; we must fervently apply for it; we must be ready to go and show ourselves to the Priest, as the law commands. In things of this kind, the spirit of indifference must be vigorously resisted: the farther we are standing off, or the farther we may be removed from God by sin, with so much the louder voice must we cry out: *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* Sincerity in prayer, therefore, being of such essential consequence, I will present a few reflections on it, to your consideration.

Notwithstanding that Christians in general are convinced of the necessity of prayer, and notwithstanding that they have received, even from their childhood, repeated instructions concerning it, there are very few, comparatively speaking, who either pray as they ought, or who know how to pray as they ought. Some apply to prayer, as to a task; and when they have performed it, conclude that they have performed it well, although not the least spark of piety and devotion animated their minds. Others have their stated times for prayer, devote an hour or two each day to pious exercises, are assiduous in the performance of their religious duties; and endeavour to keep their

attention fixed on what they are about. But at all other times, when they are not at prayer, are nearly as much attached to the world as the professed worldling, nearly as much unmortified in their affections, and offer nearly as little violence to themselves to restrain their passions, and to acquire the virtues of meekness, mildness, and brotherly love, as they do. Such as these, do not pray as they ought: for the whole tenor of their lives proves, that there is not that sincerity in their petitions, which ought necessarily to accompany prayer. Religion teaches us, that prayer is a fervent supplication to the God who made us, as to the great Giver of all those gifts, which we stand in need of in this life, and which are to promote our eternal welfare in the next. It is an acknowledgment of our total dependance on him, and of our sincere desires to obtain what we ask. It is an act of humility; for it is a confession, that we are not entitled, in justice, to the blessings we ask for; but that it is to his infinite mercies alone, that we look for relief.

When we pray, therefore, our principal endeavours ought to be, to fulfil these requisites of true prayer, namely, to be sincere in our petitions, to desire to obtain what we ask for, and to place no obstacles in the way of the grace of God. Were we to neglect these, our prayers would, with more propriety, be called an insult offered to the great Searcher of hearts, than an incense of sweet odour ascending

before his throne, and we should be rather preparing ourselves for his severest judgments, than for his choicest blessings.

It is pretended by some, who know little of the spirit of divine love, that prayer itself is a proof of sincerity, and the reason they give is, because no one would pray if he did not wish to obtain the objects of his petitions. In the common concerns of this life, it may be said that the act of petitioning is, in general, a proof of the desire of the petitioner to obtain his request. But in spiritual things it is not. Other proofs are necessary, before the sincerity of the petitioner can be duly ascertained. Does it not frequently happen that men, habitually given to drunkenness, to profane swearing, to impurities, to lying, and to other crimes, without any serious thought of amendment, attend divine service, and, at other times of the week, offer up prayers to God? And will any one say, that the mere act of petitioning, is in them a proof of their sincerity? Does it not frequently happen that others, of more regular lives, that is, others who do not fall into these greater irregularities, but yet are addicted to detraction, to mischief-making among neighbours, to a cross peevishness of temper, to family pride, and self-conceit, to a love of ease and worldly pleasure, without any desire of walking in the footsteps and becoming perfect, as their heavenly Father is perfect, offer up petitions to God for his choicest favours; and

confidently say: "I love thee my God, with my whole heart and soul: I love my neighbour as myself: I detest all my sins, and I am firmly resolved, by the help of thy grace, never more to offend thee for the time to come, but carefully to avoid all the occasions of sin!" And are these declarations alone, a sufficient proof of their sincerity? Certainly not. Reason itself tells us, that a person ought to be, if not absolutely converted from his evil ways, at least desirous of being so: if not absolutely in love with the things of God, at least feeling within himself a certain desire of forsaking the husks of swine, and returning to his Father's house. Reason itself tells us, that a person addicted to any failing, whether of the more enormous kind, or of a more pardonable nature, ought, at least, to be displeased with himself on account of his sins, and to feel a desire of forsaking them for the time to come.

These, even according to the dictates of reason, ought to be our dispositions, in order to prove that there is any thing like sincerity in our petitions to the throne of mercy. For the purpose, however, of placing this subject in a still clearer light, I will call your attention to the petitions of that prayer, which you are most accustomed to say—the *Lord's Prayer*; and specify, as we proceed, the dispositions of mind in which a person ought to be, if he be properly sincere, when he pronounces each of them. In the first place, we address him as

Our Father. This appellation denotes that we acknowledge him to be our Father, and that we are fully convinced we ought to treat him as our Father, and to pay him that obedience and respect, which is in a particular manner due to him. Will not this appellation be a severe sentence of condemnation on ourselves, if at the time we call him by that name, we are conscious that we are in a state of rebellion against him, and that we have no serious thoughts of renouncing it? That name ought to remind us that he is, and always has been a Father to us, and ought not we to feel a desire of being, henceforward at least, dutiful children to him?

Our first petitions are : *hallowed be thy name ; thy kingdom come.* By these words we beg that his holy name may be sanctified, and that his kingdom may be established in our hearts, for the purpose of preparing us for his eternal kingdom. Were we sincere in these petitions, we ought to feel a sincere desire, if we were in a state of sin, to renounce the error of our ways, or an actual determination, if we were penitents, to endeavour to sanctify his holy name, and to prepare ourselves for his eternal kingdom, by a strict and religious attention to his divine service, by fulfilling the duties of our state of life faithfully, by loving him and his holy law in the midst of our hearts, and by preferring him before all the vanities and lying fooleries of this deceitful world. We ought to

feel a desire, or an actual determination of renouncing every thing that sought to draw us from God ; of forsaking even father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, possessions, health, and life itself, rather than forsake our God again by wilful sin. One or the other of these ought to be our dispositions. But if we are continually opposing the sanctification of his holy name, and if we are walking in the broad road that leadeth to damnation, without any serious thoughts of quitting it, can it be said, with any appearance of reason, that we are sincere, when we pray that his name may be sanctified, and his kingdom established in our hearts ?

We pray that his *will* may *be done on earth as it is in heaven*. In heaven the will of God is the only will that is followed. The saints and angels have no will in opposition to his. He commands and he is obeyed. His angels are ministering spirits, and they fulfil his will joyfully and faithfully. When we repeat this petition, therefore, we pray, that we may be as ready to obey the will of God on earth, as these saints and angels are in heaven. This is the extent of our petition. Now, can we be sincere, if, at the same time, we are obstinately bent on following our own will, and if we deliberately give way to sentiments of anger and indignation, when our will is opposed by others ? Can we be sincere, if, at the same time, we murmur and complain at the dispensations of

Providence; if we repine under afflictions and disappointments; if we are impatient under pains and crosses; if we are desponding and despairing, when it does not please God to crown our endeavours for a comfortable subsistence with success? Can it be said, with reason, that there is sincerity in our petition, when we act in this manner, and feel no desire to act more in conformity with the spirit of our prayer? Ah! my brethren, we are then resisting the will of God, and proudly preferring our own will and inclination before his: and what can we expect to obtain, when we say: *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?*

We say: *give us this day our daily bread.* By this petition we beg for food and sustenance, both for soul and body. When we beg for the food of the body, or for temporal blessings, there is generally abundance of sincerity in our petitions. This is sufficiently proved by the constant labour, the unremitted attention to business, the anxious solicitude for worldly possessions, which is generally witnessed. But, can it be said, that we give sufficient evidence of our sincerity, when we pray for the food of the soul? The food of the soul is the word of God, either preached to us, or read by us in spiritual books; the holy sacraments, especially the blessed Eucharist, and divine Grace. This is the food of the soul; and this is the principal part of the petition: *give us this day our daily bread.* Can we, then, be properly

said to be sincere in this our petition, if, at the same time, we voluntarily entertain an aversion to the word of God, and, for worldly motives, obstinately refuse to accept the invitation of our Lord to his banquet, and to partake of the bread of life in the Holy Eucharist? Is it possible for that person to be sincere, who prostrates himself before the God of Majesty, and petitions for spiritual food; and, when he invites him to partake of it, refuses to accept it?

We beg that our trespasses may be forgiven, in the same manner as we forgive those who trespass against us. That we are sincere in our wishes for the forgiveness of our sins, may be readily allowed. But something more than the sincerity of wishes is required in this case. If we do not apply for the forgiveness of our sins, in the manner by which alone it is to be obtained; if we do not enter into sentiments of true repentance; if we do not go, and show ourselves to the priests, as we are commanded; if we do not resolve on a change of life, the sincerity of our wishes will avail us no more, than the sincerity of his wishes will avail a man, who is desirous of a comfortable subsistence, and will not set his hand to work to obtain it.— And then again, with respect to the condition that is annexed to our petition:—we pray that our sins may be forgiven, as we forgive our enemies. Now, if we entertain sentiments of rancour and animosity against any individual:

if, merely on account of past quarrels and misunderstandings, we refuse to associate with or speak to one with whom we were formerly intimate, what meaning must we attach to the petition, when it proceeds from our lips? No other than that, as we are at variance with our neighbour, the Almighty would continue at variance with us: that, as we repel from us our offended brother, the Almighty would continue to repel us from him. I do not mean to say that, because we have once been intimate, we must be always intimate; or that we are to place our confidence a second time in the man who has once betrayed it. I only speak of those dissolutions of friendship, which are occasioned by quarrels, and which are perpetuated by animosity and ill-will. These, however, are not unfrequent: and it would not be too much to say, that many examples of this rancorous spirit have occurred within the circle of the acquaintance of every one of you. And what is it that these unhappy Christians pray for, when they say, *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*? May we not, with reason, recommend to them the advice of our Saviour? *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift. Be at agreement with thy adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.* (Matt. v.)

We beg, in conclusion, that we may not be exposed to temptation above our strength, but that we may be delivered from all evil. By these petitions, we express an abhorrence of every thing that tends to sin, and consequently, we ought to be disposed to form a determination, not only to resist temptation by the assistance of the grace of God, but to avoid every occasion that will expose us to the danger of falling into it. This being the meaning of these two last petitions, what must we think of the man who, within the space of a short time after he has prayed that he may not be led into temptation, runs voluntarily, or is easily prevailed on, and that time after time, to go to those places, where he knows, from experience, that he will meet with temptation above his strength? What are we to think of the man, or rather, perhaps, we should say, what ought he to think of himself, who by words beseeches the Almighty to deliver him from evil, and, immediately after, courts evil, and willingly embraces it? Can there be any thing like sincerity in such petitions, particularly when the same thing occurs over and over again? It is not my intention to infer, that, because these unfortunate Christians are not in proper dispositions to offer up these petitions, it is useless for them to pray at all. Far from it. Were they to neglect prayer wholly, they would soon be given up to a reprobate sense. But, if they continue to pray at the usual times, al-

though their prayers may not profit them, because they pray amiss, yet the very action of prayer causes them to reflect upon themselves, and may, some time or other, cause them to reflect seriously, and be a very powerful means of reclaiming them from the error of their ways. However, I earnestly recommend the serious consideration of these petitions to those who frequent public houses, and who run after scenes of dissipation and dangerous amusements.

From this cursory review of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, we may form an idea of the dispositions, in which we ought to be, when we offer up these, or any other supplications, to the throne of mercy. Oh ! my brethren, be careful, be attentive, when you pray. Perhaps it would be an admonition of equal, or greater importance, were I to say, be careful, be attentive, when you are not at prayer : for sincerity in prayer principally depends on watchfulness over your conduct at other times. Prayer is of more serious consequence than is generally imagined. It does not consist merely in reading over a set form of words ; nor in repeating prayers, which we recite from memory ; nor yet in pouring forth a quantity of words, in what is called extempore prayer. All this may be done, and not a word of what we have said ascend before the throne of God. We ought to endeavour, at other times, to put ourselves into proper dispositions : we ought to wish to be fervent and devout : we ought to have a desire

of renouncing sin, and of serving God with our whole hearts. Reason itself says, that if we have not these dispositions, we are in a very unfit state to hold communications with the Almighty. In our communications with our fellow-creatures, those at least whom we value, and whose friendship we wish to secure, we pride ourselves on our sincerity. Let us be sincere, in the [same manner, in our dealings with God. Insincerity, in treating with him, will avail us nothing. We cannot impose upon him, for he is the searcher of hearts. Knowing, therefore, as he does, our most secret thoughts, what are we to expect, when we offer up petitions to him, for blessings which we neither seek for, nor sincerely desire? If a curse be denounced against those who do the work of God negligently, what are they to expect, who do not do his work at all, and who, when they present themselves before him, and ask for his help, are no ways inclined to accept of his help, but are resolved, for the time being at least, to live in the violation of his laws? What are they to expect, who, having no reason to say with the Pharisee: *Lord, I thank thee, that I am not like the rest of men*; do not say from their hearts: *Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner*?—Ah! my brethren, we have reason to tremble when we go to prayer, lest, through the depravity of our hearts, we should say any thing to the God of Truth, that is not strictly conformable to our inclinations, or is in op-

position to the line of conduct which we still continue to pursue.

Be attentive, for the future, to this important point. If, on former occasions, you have not prayed as you ought to pray, enter seriously into yourselves, and by your sincerity for the future, make amends for the past. If you have spent your lives in innocence, or if, having sinned, you have reason to hope that you have made your peace with God, and have endeavoured uniformly to be sincere in the petitions that you have offered to him, you may depend upon it, that, although you may have sometimes been troubled with involuntary distractions, your prayers have found acceptance with God, and you have laid up a treasure for yourselves in heaven. Proceed on with fervour and perseverance. *Be instant in prayer, not ceasing* The Lord will not turn away from your humble supplications. Although, perhaps, he may not immediately grant every petition that you make, he will not long delay. If you beg for spiritual blessings for yourselves, he will be sure to bestow them all in his own good time. If you beg for spiritual blessings for others, he will either hear your prayers, or he will reward your charity, if, in his unerring justice, he should not grant your requests. At all times, be instant in prayer. He frequently suffers his faithful servants to stand knocking at the door for a considerable time, before he opens to them. But this is for

the exercise of their patience, and in order to encrease their merits.—If he deals in the same manner with you, do not faint. Be zealous, and persevere. Follow the example of the lepers, as recorded in this day's gospel. Let your prayers be animated with fervour: let them proceed from your hearts: let them be in unison with your desires: let them be accompanied with a sincere, or, if you have followed the ways of the prodigal for a length of time, with, at least, an incipient love of God. Reason informs us, that we ought to attend to these things. We witness them, in the supplications for relief, which are made by the distressed pauper. Let us exhibit the same, in our supplications to God in the midst of our necessities, and we may confidently hope, relying on his promises and mercies, that every prayer will be heard, and that every blessing will be imparted to us, which can contribute to our sanctification in this life, and which will prepare us for the possession of that eternal inheritance, which is purchased for us in the abodes of Sion hereafter.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON SERVING GOD ALONE.

No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or, he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon... MATT. vi. 24.

IN the gospel of this Sunday, my brethren, is contained one of the most alarming and important maxims of the Christian doctrine. It is one of the most alarming, because few consider the import of it in a proper manner : and it is one of the most important, because the consequences, arising from this neglect, are of the most serious nature. *No man can serve two masters..... You cannot serve God and mammon.*

In order to understand this important subject in its proper meaning, we must ascertain what is meant by mammon ; for mammon is the master which we cannot serve conjointly with God. Mammon is a word which, according to the gospel language, signifies *riches* : and riches are misemployed or unduly served, when they

are made to contribute to *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life.* (1 John ii.) Or, in other words, when they are employed as the means of indulging in sensual pleasures, worldly dissipations, and the pursuits of vanity or ambition. This is the mammon, which we cannot serve in union with God ; and a few reflections will convince you, that it is impossible that we should love the one, and not hate the other, or that we should hold to one, and not despise the other.

When our Lord declares, that no man can serve two masters, he does not speak of the common concerns of the world, as if it were not in the power of the man, who labours for his support, to work with earnestness and fidelity for two, or more, separate masters, nor yet, as if it were incompatible with a christian life, to serve an earthly master and our heavenly Father, at the same time. He speaks of that sovereign homage, which is due to him as Lord of all ; and gives us to understand that that homage cannot be paid, as it ought to be, unless the heart is centered wholly in him. The man, whose time is almost wholly taken up in providing for his temporal support, may have his heart centered in God, at the time he is at work, as well as the hermit when he is at his prayers ; he may refer all his labours to the honour and glory of God, and thus pay him an undivided allegiance. But the man, who seeks himself only, whose affections are engrossed

by worldly pleasures, and whose chief, and perhaps only delight, is dissipation and folly, attends to the service of God with a divided heart, the greater share of which is given to his mortal enemy—the world; and, consequently, he does not pay that sovereign homage to his Creator, which is his due. In fact, may we not go farther, and say, that *he hates the one and loves the other, and holds to one, and despises the other.*—To hate and despise God, in the plain meaning of the words, is certainly a crime which would strike horror into the mind of the most abandoned reprobate; but when we consider the infinite majesty of this great Being, and his titles to our service, we may be said to hate, and despise him, according to a certain meaning of the words, when we love earthly things in preference to Him, and when we devote the greater part of our time to vanities, without any regard whatever to his honour and glory.

Let us, however, enter into particulars, and we shall be able to place this subject in a clearer point of view. There are multitudes in the world, and even amongst us, perhaps, the number is not inconsiderable, who live as if they were never to die,—who live, as if the enjoyments of this life were the only objects worthy of their desires. How many are there, of the lower classes, who, with the exception of a few prayers, never perform a single action during the day, purely for the honour and glory

of God ; whose thoughts are never turned to him, nor fixed on his divine presence ! How many who, instead of labouring to serve God, offend him many ways,—who open their ears to detraction, or immodest discourses,—who suffer their eyes to wander upon objects capable of exciting the most dangerous feelings,—who defile their tongue with lies, defamation, profane swearing, or lewd insinuations,—who suffer their tempers to be ruffled by passion,—and who, at the conclusion of their daily work, run into excesses, which it is needless to mention !—How many, of the higher classes, are there, who, although time is at their disposal, devote as little of it to prayer, spiritual exercises, or works of charity, as they, whose time is necessarily devoted to the business of their calling ! How many, who, as soon as their usual devotions are concluded, seek after nothing, during the remainder of the day, but the gratifications of pleasure:—who seem to think that they were born for earthly joys, and that no account whatever will be demanded of their time, at the day of judgment ! How many, who live as the professed worldling in every other respect, except that they pray once or twice in the day, frequent the temple of the Lord on Sundays, for the purpose of hearing Mass, and refrain from the grosser excesses, which are witnessed only in the more depraved part of mankind ! Can it be said, of either the one or the other of these, that they serve God as their

only master? Is it not clear, from their general conduct, that God has a much less share of their thoughts, of their words, of their actions, of their solitudes, of their desires, of their whole selves, than the things of the world? Is it not clear that their hearts are divided, and that a very little share indeed of them is given to God? Is it not clear that they are endeavouring to serve two masters? or rather, we may say, is it not clear that they are serving the world and themselves, as their masters by preference, and that the service they pay to God is nothing more than a certain routine of pious exercises, which they have been habituated to perform, and which is very trifling indeed, when compared with the many acts of devotion and charity, which it is in their power to perform, and which the will of God requires of them? It is not in the power of man to add to, or to take away from what the Lord has enjoined. Willingly would I extend mercy to all, who, with even imperfect motives, craved for mercy: willingly would I say to those who appear regular in my eyes, although perhaps, they may appear differently in the sight of God, "thy sins are forgiven thee." But, such power is not given to man. He cannot take away, or add to what the word of God enjoins. If it is required that the whole heart should be consecrated to God, as it certainly is, man cannot say, that God will be satisfied with only a part. If it is said, that you must seek God

and his holy laws before every thing else, as it certainly is; man cannot say, that you may seek yourselves and your own enjoyments, when they are in opposition to his holy laws. If it is said, that we cannot love and serve two masters, whose interests are opposed to each other, man cannot, with any appearance of authority, say, that we are not transgressing, when we suffer our affections to be divided, and when we give the greater part of our love and of our time to things, which, unless referred to God by a special intention, have no regard whatever to the sanctification, or salvation of our souls.—If such power, therefore, is not given to man, the words of the inspired text, must be considered as the words of unerring justice,—words, which will decide our eternal doom hereafter: *no man can serve two masters: for he will either hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

What multitudes, again, are there, who are led away by the *lust of the eyes*, and who seem to live for no other purpose, than to gratify their curiosity, and to indulge their pride. I allow, that a certain latitude may be given to the gratification of curiosity, and a certain pride may be indulged in appearing decent and respectable, according to each one's rank in life. But how great is the multitude of those, who seem to make these things the chief objects of their existence! How many, whose

thoughts are constantly running upon the vanities of the world! whose superfluities are spent in the theatres, or at other places of amusement! whose eyes are never wearied with seeing, nor their ears with hearing! How many are there, who do not merely wish to appear decent, according to their rank in life, but who make dress their study; who consider outward appearance as the chief criterion of merit; who seek to decorate their persons beyond what is usual in their state of life; who spend much more in dress, than their means ought to allow; who envy those, who surpass them either in finery or beauty, and who look down with a kind of contempt upon those, who are inferior to them in either of these respects!

What multitudes there are, my brethren, of both these descriptions! and can it be said of them, that God is the master whom they endeavour to serve? Many of them, probably, attend to the duties of morning and evening prayers, and are regular in the frequentation of the sacraments, and the public service of the Church on Sundays and holidays. But must it not be said, that they pay greater attention to their bodies than to their souls? that they are more eager after vanity, than they are after piety? and that they are more solicitous about their own ease and pleasure in this life, than they are about the things of eternity? And what is this, but a testimony of a divided heart? what is this, but a proof that

they are pretending to serve two masters, and that mammon has a far greater share of their service than God?

In the third place, what numbers are there, who are led away by *the pride of life*; or, in other words, what numbers are there, who devote their lives wholly to the amassing riches, whose souls are burning with the most ardent desires of acquiring a fortune,—who are not content merely with a competency, but who seek, by every means possible, to aggrandize their families, and who are ready to sacrifice, for the sake of wealth, comfort and enjoyment, and peace of mind, and health, and conscience, and even the soul itself? Where is it that we see anxiety and solicitude? where is it that we find restless cares, and inordinate ambition? where is it that we witness penurious avarice, and exactions, and extortions, and oppressions of the poor? Is it not in the breasts, and in the conduct of those, who, with reason, may be called the children of the world, and the followers of mammon, and the adorers of the golden calf? And what room is there, in hearts like these, for the love of the poor and humble Jesus? Their hearts, I allow, are not divided. They do not attempt to serve two masters. But who is the master that they serve? and what is the recompense that they have reason to expect hereafter? To men like these, of what avail will be the belief of all the articles of Faith, or being members of the true Church? Of what

avail will be the recitation of a few prayers, or the observance of certain precepts of Church discipline? Nothing will secure their salvation, but turning entirely from the error of their ways, renouncing their worldly dispositions, entering into sincere sentiments of repentance, and serving God with their whole hearts for the time to come.

Let it not, however, be understood, that I condemn laudable exertions to procure an independence. It is lawful for any man, however extensive his possessions may be, to endeavour to add to his stores. As it is said of images, that it is lawful to make them, provided we do not worship them as Gods, so it is with respect to the riches of the world, that it is lawful to seek after them, provided we do not make them our God. It is the disposition of mind, therefore, that is criminal in the sight of God : it is the over-eagerness, the inordinate solicitude, the anxious cares, which agitate the minds of the lovers of mammon, and which withdraw their attention from God and his service, that renders them objects of abomination in the sight of heaven.

Oh ! my brethren, let us strive to avoid these dreadful evils. What will the *lust of the flesh*, or the *lust of the eyes*, or the *pride of life*, profit us ? Will they secure us from the wrath that is to come ? Have they everlasting dwellings for our inheritance ? Truly, my brethren, *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except, serving God*,

and loving him alone. All earthly things pass away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves . . or as a bird flieth through the air . . so we being born, forthwith cease to be. (Wisd. v.) “Vanity it is, therefore,” says the Following of Christ, “to seek riches, and to place our trust in them. It is vanity, to ambition honours, and to pride ourselves in them. It is vanity, to follow the desires of the flesh, and to embrace that, which will cause us to suffer grievously hereafter. It is vanity, to wish for a long life, and to be little solicitous to lead a good life.” *Foll. of Ch.* chap. i.

Let us profit, my brethren, by these salutary admonitions, and withdraw our affections from these vain toys and lying fooleries. We have only one true and living God ; let us adore and serve him alone. Let us look up to him as our great and only Master, and make his will the sole rule of our own conduct. Let us consider him as the great dispenser of all human events, and let us be patient and submissive under all his appointments. The true Christian acts in this manner. He considers himself as a servant receiving his orders from above. He has an unbounded confidence in the love and wisdom of his Supreme Lord, and therefore he obeys implicitly. In the midst, even, of afflictions and crosses, he looks up to the hand that chastises him, as to the hand of a father, and bows down with the submission of an obedient

child.—In the midst of his daily occupations, he frequently fixes his thoughts on his great Employer ; reflects, that he is present with him, and imagines, that he hears him encouraging him to diligence and attention, by the prospect of the immense rewards which will be prepared for him. If he does not meet with success, or if he is visited with losses and disappointments, his mind is not overclouded with uneasiness and despondency, because he knows that the will of God has ordained that it should be so, and has ordained it for the wisest purposes. If he experiences contradictions and affronts, he submits to them with cheerfulness, from whatever quarter they come ; knowing that God intends to exercise his patience by these trials, and by patience prepare him for a crown. If he has not sufficient employ, or if he has reason to foresee that poverty is advancing on him, he is not depressed with melancholy and grief, because he is convinced, that he is still under the protection of the Most High, and that He, who clothes the lilies of the field, and feeds the birds of the air, will not fail to provide for him also, if no endeavours are wanting on his part. If the hand of sickness is laid upon him, he is patient under suffering, and resigned to whatever may be the will of God, because he knows that he is chastised for his greater good. If, being in the state of servitude, he is subjected to the tempers of a harsh, choleric, capricious, or discontented

master, he is patient and mild, he goes to his work, like our Saviour to the cross, without opening his mouth, because he is well assured, that it is by such trials as these that his heavenly Father wills him to do penance for his sins.—In a word, in all the different occurrences of life, he receives every thing as coming from the hand of God : he performs all his works with the sole view of pleasing him : and whether he eats, or drinks, or sleeps, or wakes, he does all for the glory of his heavenly Master. (1 Cor. x.)

In this manner the true Christian spends his days : and his days are full days, for all his actions are pleasing to his divine Master. He looks forward with hope and confidence to a happy termination of his labours : the moment arrives ; he sleeps in the Lord ; and truly blessed is he, for his works follow him.

Can we flatter ourselves, that we live in this manner, and that we shall die in this manner ? It is in vain to rely on false appearances. We must live well, if we are to die well. It will not profit us, to exclaim with Balaam, *May my soul die the death of the just*, (Num. xxiii.), unless we strive to live the life of the just. It is to no purpose, to hope that God will accept of our hearts after death, if they have not been worthy of his acceptance during life. Why, then, do we suffer the precious time of life to be spent in a way, that will not profit us hereafter ? Why do we fix our affections on

things, which we cannot possess for ever? Why do we fight, as if we were beating the air? why do we run, as if at an uncertainty? We have an incorruptible crown set before us, and why will we not love God with our whole hearts, and serve him with our whole strength, in order to gain possession of it?

Oh! let us enter into ourselves without delay. Let us not be led into a fatal security, by the performance of a few exercises of piety. Let us not be diverted from entering the narrow path, merely because the multitude walk in the broad road: for it is not the example of others that we are enjoined to follow, but the precepts of the gospel. Let us adhere strictly to our duty, and never henceforward divide our services between God and mammon. He will amply repay his servants for their labours: he will reward them even in this life, by imparting to them happiness far superior to any that is enjoyed by the followers of mammon.

What can a man wish for more, than to enjoy contentment in the midst of trials, and to be resigned under all the vicissitudes of human life? What can he wish for more pleasing, than to perform with cheerfulness and delight every action that he has to perform? What can he wish for more profitable, than to be labouring in the cause of so great and so good a master? What can he wish for more agreeable, than to be always in his presence, and always acceptable to him? What can he wish for more

consoling, than to be always looking forward to an eternity of happiness ; not indeed with certainty, but freed from the tortures of anxiety, solicitude, and remorse ? If any thing, in this land of exile, can be called happiness, this is truly deserving of the name. This is what the saints enjoyed on earth, and the same may be enjoyed by you.

Be no longer enemies to yourselves. You all wish to promote your true welfare ; promote it in a manner that will ensure to you success. The greater part of your lives is devoted to toil and labour : put it all to profit. Offer all your works up to God ; not in words only, but in the sincerity of your souls. Labour, as if you beheld him always present before you, and as if you heard his gracious words, commanding you to do, for the love of him, what you have to perform. Submit to all the hardships, and afflictions, and self-denials which you may experience, with the same contented mind as you would, were you to see him carrying his cross before you, and displaying his multiplied and painful wounds, endured for the love of you.

There is no difficulty in ordering your lives in this manner. It is as easy to do it, as it is to neglect it ; and it is infinitely more agreeable. Be faithful, therefore, in this essential point. It is recommended to you, not merely as matter of counsel, tending to greater perfection, but as matter of precept, requisite for your eternal welfare. Attend to it, therefore,

with diligence. Serve God, not only during the time which is especially consecrated to his service, but serve him at all times. Serve him in your labours :—serve him in your recreations :—serve him in your meals :—serve him in your rest :—serve him in your afflictions :—serve him in your poverty :—in a word, serve him at all times, and in all things. In this manner, you will acknowledge him to be, and will serve him as, your only Master, during the time of your mortal pilgrimage : and he, in return, will reward you as good and faithful servants, will administer to your necessities and comforts in this life, and will crown you with a wreath of immortal glory in the next.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON DEATH.

And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother ; and she was a widow : and much people of the city was with her.

LUKE vii. 12.

THE mournful spectacle, which is presented to our view in the gospel of this day, is not one of those events which can claim our attention on account of novelty. To such spectacles we have been all accustomed. We have witnessed the funeral processions of relatives, of friends, and neighbours ;—of young and old, of poor and rich, of people of all states and conditions. The spectacle, therefore, is presented before us, not to excite our astonishment, or our commiseration. No : my brethren, it is intended that it should produce effects, of a far different, and of a far more important nature. It is intended, that the history of a young man, cut off in the prime of life, in the vigour of strength, in the midst of his expectations, should remind you of the uncertainty

of life, and should induce you to set your accounts in order, and be ready to go forth to meet your Judge, at whatever hour he may be pleased to issue the awful summons for your appearance before him. These are the effects, which the subject of the present gospel is intended to produce in your minds. I will enlarge upon them in this discourse. Be attentive, for your dearest interests are concerned.

It is appointed for all men once to die. The day will come when I, when every individual in this assembly, shall be stretched on the bed of death, and these bodies of ours shall be reduced to their original dust. The millions, who have inhabited this world before us, are dead, not one of them has escaped; and the same doom awaits us. The sentence of death was passed upon us at our very conception, and sooner or later it will be put in execution. In the same manner as we speak of our forefathers, and point out the year and day of their death, so likewise will our survivors speak of us: "they are dead," they will say, "they died on such a day, in such a year."—But when will this year, when will this day arrive? This is a question, to which no man can give an answer. We know that we shall die, and that is all. There is no security against the arrows of death, in any stage of existence, from infancy to old age. Frequently, the tender infant is hurried from the gates of life to the gates of death. The youth is sometimes nipt, like a

tender flower in the bud. The full-grown man is cut down, like grass, in the very vigour and strength of life. And the aged drop off, like leaves in the autumn. We have had innumerable examples of death, in all these different stages : and in one or the other of these shall we be, when the fatal summons arrives. We are now, some in one stage, and some in another. The greater number of us are in good health : and there is not one amongst us, who has reason to think that death, according to nature, is near at hand. But these may be all vain, delusive appearances. Sudden as lightning, sometimes is the arrow of death discharged from the bow, and wounds and kills, in the twinkling of an eye. Several of us, perhaps, are already marked out. No one can promise himself security for one instant. The fatal shafts fly so promiscuously on every side, that no one can guess the next victim.

Oh ! you, who are accustomed to pass whole months and years in the guilt of mortal sin, think of this awful truth : think, whilst you have time. If the arrow of death should fall suddenly upon you : if you should be surprised in the midst of your sins, (and no one can assure you that you will not) what will be your eternal doom ? No other than a miserable eternity. Eternity to you, will be an eternity of woe. Your short-lived pleasures, your delay of repentance, your presumptuous confidence, will be succeeded by the tortures of the bot-

tomless abyss. Think then, whilst you have time. Put your house in order before it be too late.—Profit by the sad experience of others. What I now say to you, has, in all probability, been said to thousands, who are now bewailing their criminal neglect in the regions of eternal darkness. Some one or more of them, perhaps, have heard me deliver this same discourse, in this very place where I am repeating it to you, their survivors, with encreased earnestness. They listened to my importunities; but they would not think seriously whilst they had time. They secretly said to themselves: “I know that the hour of death is uncertain, and that I may be called away at a moment’s notice. But I am now in health, and, in all probability, I shall have time to make my peace with God. It is not my intention to continue on in the ways of sin. Repentance is necessary for me; and before long, I will begin seriously. In a short time, I shall be more at liberty for this great work; and then I will renounce my evil ways, and serve God in good earnest.”—Thus they reasoned. But the appointed time never came. Fresh obstacles, produced fresh delays. At length the fatal moment arrived, when they least expected it: the slender thread was cut, before they had made their peace with God; and they fell, never more to rise again.—Imagine to yourselves, that you behold the mouth of the bottomless abyss open under your feet, and that you hear a voice proceeding

from it, distinctly uttering these words: "Yesterday for me: to-day for thee. Yesterday, I thoughtlessly played in the courts of mirth and festivity. I had flattered myself that I should have time to repent, were I to delay a little longer. But I was deceived. On a sudden, the horrors of death surrounded me, and the perils of hell found me. I forgot that God had declared, that he would not be mocked;—that as a man lived, so should he die; and that he, who courted the danger, should perish in it. These were truths that made no impression on my mind. The fatal moment arrived:—I was seized with a mortal illness:—my body and mind were too much tortured to allow me seriously to repent, or to turn to God, as I ought to have done. I deceived myself to the very end. I expected to recover. But my glass was run; and here I am, tortured in this flame, separated for ever from my God, and condemned to utter fruitless lamentations for all eternity. Oh! dismal eternity! Oh! the racking tortures of despair!—Ye, unthinking mortals! learn, from the sad experience of a fellow-creature, to think, whilst you have time. Yesterday for me: to-day for you."—Were you to hear a voice distinctly pronouncing these words, and were you to recognize the voice of a friend, a relative, or acquaintance, what would be the effect produced in your minds? Would not your souls be chilled with horror? Would you not immediately take the alarm, and prevent

the danger of incurring the same terrible judgments, by entering, without delay, into sincere sentiments of repentance? Would you dare to lie down to sleep this very night, in the state of mortal sin?

Ah! my brethren, although you are not permitted to hear the lamentations of these wretched victims of divine indignation, yet, there are thousands and thousands in that place of woe, and some of them, probably, your former friends and acquaintance, who, with the rich man in the gospel, (*Luke xvi.*) solicit the Almighty, to be allowed to appear to you, their brethren, and admonish you, lest you come into the same place of misery, and who, were they permitted to disclose their sorrows, would harrow up your very souls.

Think, then, my brethren, whilst you have time. Neither youth, nor health, nor strength of constitution, can ensure to you the possession of life even for a single day, nor for a single hour. Why then expose yourselves to the danger of perishing everlastingly? This greatest of all misfortunes will not, probably, fall on any individual here present, during the course of this day. We may entertain every hope, that we shall all see to-morrow. But yet, this is uncertain. However, without speaking of to-morrow, I will ask, what probability is there that we shall all see this day month? Seldom does a month pass, but one or more of this small congregation is called away. I myself, have

to pay the last duties to several, during the course of every month in the year. It is very possible, therefore, nay, it is probable, that before one month is elapsed, the soul of one here present, if not more, may be summoned to the bar of eternal justice, and his lot decided for all eternity. I do not, indeed, say, that it is certain; and because of this *uncertainty*, the *probability* makes but little impression, and perhaps, will not cause one unrepenting sinner to look into himself, and set his house in order.

—But, supposing that a voice from heaven was heard, addressed particularly to you, who are here before me, declaring, that during the course of the month, the souls of one or more should be called for, would it not strike terror and dismay into the soul of every individual? Is there one so hardened, as deliberately to risk his soul upon the chance that he was not the intended victim? An ingenious calculator, and great philosopher, has certified that, taking the whole of the population of the world, it is not more than ten thousand to one in favour of any individual, whether he will live from night till morning. If this may be said of any of us, individually, how many to one is it, that any person amongst us, taken individually, will see this day month? Not one thousand, nor one hundred, nor fifty. But, supposing that it was one hundred, or one thousand to one in his favour, is the eternal salvation of his dear soul of so little consequence in his estimation, as to induce him

to expose it to that risk? Can any one of us, calmly and seriously, say to himself, that it is only a hundred, or a thousand to one, whether or not he will be taken ill and die, before one month is elapsed? Can he be so hardened in his sins, can he be so wedded to the perishable things of this world, as quietly to go on in his wicked ways, under this dreadful uncertainty? And yet, this is the case of every individual in this assembly. I do not separate my lot from yours. I am in the same uncertainty as you are; and there is the same chance against me, as against you. My case is the same as yours. It may truly be said, that it is not more than a hundred, or a thousand to one, whether I myself, who am now before you, in the full vigour of life,—whether I myself, who am now delivering to you the truths of salvation, with all the affectionate solicitude, of which my nature is susceptible,—whether I myself shall be alive this day month. Ah! my brethren, before one other moon is revolved, these eyes, which now behold you with all the warmth of pastoral affection, may be for ever closed in death:—these lips, which have so often uttered words of comfort, or of terror to your souls, which have so often moved in fervent supplications to the God of mercies for your welfare, may be for ever silent:—these hands, which have so often offered up the sacrifice of the immaculate Lamb of God upon this altar, for your salvation, may be for ever

laid low :—this heart, which beats with such warmth for the eternal salvation of every individual amongst you, and which would gladly be immolated to procure for you the enjoyment of God in another world, may be for ever chilled by the cold hand of death. In a word, this frame, which is now compact, and in perfect health, may, before one month is elapsed, be dissolved into its original dust.—Yes : my brethren, all this may happen to me : it may happen to any individual in this assembly.—There is not one of us, indeed, who expects that it will take place, but it is possible : and this possibility fills me with dismay. If it should be, therefore, that one of us was marked out to be the victim of death, during the course of this month, where will be his soul a month hence ? As for the body, it matters nothing. The soul is all. Where will be his soul ? Will it be found worthy to be received into the embraces of his God ? or will it be rejected from before his face, and cast into outer darkness ? All this will depend on the state in which he shall be at the moment of dissolution. If he shall be in the state of grace ;—if he shall have brought forth worthy fruits of repentance ;—if he shall have fulfilled all the duties of his state, and is found in perfect charity with all mankind ; then, happiness for all eternity, will be his portion—happiness—uninterrupted happiness, in the bosom of the God of love, for endless ages. Oh ! that awful moment ! How

shall we then wish to have lived, as we would wish to die ! What a cheering prospect, to behold the gates of the eternal Sion ready to be opened to us !——But if it should be, that the unhappy soul was not in the state of grace, if he had not prepared himself for his last moment, during the time of health, and was surprised in his sins, then where will he be this day month ? Alas ! he will be immersed in the pool of fire and brimstone, accursed by God,—the object of his bitterest hatred and indignation, for endless ages.—My God ! deliver me from this terrible complication of all evils ! Give me grace to think seriously, whilst I have time.

My brethren, these are truths. And there is not one amongst us but will say, that they are alarming truths. You are situated upon the brink of a dreadful precipice, and there is not one month, one night, or one hour, of your lives, that you can promise to yourselves security from falling into it, provided you remain in the state of sin. And is there one amongst you, that can enjoy tranquillity in this state ? Is there one amongst you, so callous to every finer feeling, so entirely lost to his own dearest interests, as to continue on, for a length of time, in this state ? Oh ! for God's sake, let it not be said of any of you. You all wish to save your souls : and you all dread the idea of being condemned to eternal torments. Think then, seriously, whilst you have time. Embrace the

means which the goodness of God has provided for you. Renounce this cheating, this ungrateful world. Take off your affections from all created things, and fix them on Him, who alone is worthy of your love—who alone can make you happy. No longer seek your consolation here, where your stay, perhaps, will be but momentary, and where all is smoke and vanity : but look up to those heavenly mansions, where existence and enjoyment will never end. Subdue your passions. Destroy, as far as nature will allow, that fuel of unquenchable flames which is within you ; and encourage the growth of those more amiable virtues, which are engrafted in your souls—meekness, humility, purity, and religion. Repent, from your hearts, of all your sins. Seek a reconciliation with your offended God. Bring forth the fruits which he expects at your hands. Enter upon a change of life without delay. There is no time to be lost. The gates of eternity are, perhaps, already opening before you ; and no sooner shall they be opened, than an invisible hand shall force you to enter. Begin your preparation, therefore, without delay ; and in a short time you will have nothing to fear.

These are the effects, which the spectacle presented to you in this day's gospel, ought to produce in your souls. I wish not to terrify the virtuous and zealous Christian : my only desire is, to rouse the impenitent, to awaken the tepid, and to bring all to repentance. I wish not to

create in you melancholy ideas, to depress your spirits, or to render you unfit for society :—my only desire is to convince you of the vanity and folly of fixing your tabernacle in this uncertain world, and to induce you to seek the kingdom of God and his justice, before all other things. These are my desires ; and happy will you be, if you correspond with them. What is there terrifying in death to a soul, who sincerely loves God, and who wishes to be dissolved, and to be with Christ ? The Christian who walks in the footsteps of his Lord and Saviour, considers death as the termination of all the evils and afflictions of life. He looks to it as to the happy port, where storms and tempests will never more be experienced. He considers it as the close of all the perils, of all the temptations which he has to encounter. He considers it as the gate into the abodes of eternal rest. Humility, indeed, causes him to dread the issue of that great trial, which he is to undergo, not being positively assured, whether he is worthy of love or hatred. But this salutary fear has always been familiar to him. This it was, that caused him to prefer the ways of God to the ways of men. This it was, that caused him to keep his lamp continually burning with the oil of charity and good works. This it was, that caused him to choose the better part, and to exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist, *Thou art my portion, O Lord, and my inheritance for ever.* (Ps. cxli.) And now that his last moment is

come, this fear is a greater subject of joy, than of consternation. The consolations of heaven flow in upon him with profusion. He cries out, with St. Paul, in ecstasies of love and confidence: *I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me.* (1 Tim. iv.) O what a cheering prospect is this to the dying Christian! How precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints! *May my last end be like unto theirs!!*

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON RASH JUDGMENT.

And it came to pass, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chiefs of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day to eat bread, that they watched him. LUKE xiv. 1.

IN this manner, my brethren, was the conduct of our Lord inspected by his enemies : *they watched him* : not with the laudable and pious intention of certifying, from his words and works, the reality of his heavenly mission, but for the base purpose of discovering a plausible pretext for defaming him.

The same is, too frequently, the conduct of Christians towards each other at the present day. They watch their neighbour. They scrutinize every action of their neighbour : and sometimes even arrogate to themselves the power of diving into the secrets of hearts, and determine the precise intentions, by which their neighbour is actuated in all that he does. This is very common among Christians ; and their

motive in general is, not for the purpose of discovering the good works of their neighbour, and of encouraging themselves, by his example, to greater exertions in the cause of God and of their own souls ; but for the base purpose of discovering his faults and imperfections, in hopes of having an occasion to lessen his reputation, either in their own esteem, by *rash judgment*, or in the esteem of others, by *defamation and scandal*. Such conduct as this argues a great depravity of disposition, and a total want of that brotherly love, which is inseparable from the true spirit of piety and religion. —On a former Sunday, I called your attention to the subject of defamation and scandal : I will now propose to your pious consideration a few reflections on rash judgment. Be attentive : for the vice of rash judgment is of wider extent than is generally imagined. It creeps imperceptibly into the soul, and there is hardly one to be found, even amongst those who labour strenuously for the salvation of their souls, but who has been, and frequently now is, guilty of it in a greater or a less degree.

One of the most positive commands of God, frequently inculcated both in the Old and New Testament, is, that we *shall not bear false witness against our neighbour*. The Almighty seems to be solicitous, that every one of his creatures should possess a good name amongst his brethren. He takes their character under the wings of his special protection : and even, when

there are those amongst us, whose conduct is not in strict unison with the precepts of his gospel, he wills not, that any one of us invade that holy sanctuary, and rob them of that which we are not authorised to take from them. *Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.* (Luke vi.) *If a man be overtaken in any fault, instruct such a one in the spirit of mildness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* (Gal. vi.)

This tenderness, which the Almighty seems to feel for the character of our neighbour, is not out of any particular love for the transgressors of his laws, nor is it to be considered as an encouragement to the wicked to sin with less reserve, seeing that it is forbidden to others, to scrutinize their actions, or censure their conduct. But the object is, to promote the sanctification of the souls of his elect. He himself has declared, that the multitude walk *in the broad road, that leadeth to damnation*, (Matt. vii.): that *the world is at enmity with him*, (1 John ii.): and that, *although many are called, yet few are chosen*, (Matt. xx.) This he himself has declared: but he has declared it, because he is searcher of hearts, and because judgment belongs to him. But he wills not, that they who are of the number of the chosen few, should defile their souls, by transgressing in any manner against the laws of Christian Charity. He knows, that they are incapable of ascertaining, in a just manner, the motives, and the crimina-

lity of the actions of their neighbours ; and therefore he wishes them to avoid the danger of guilt, which would be incurred by passing judgment on them in their own minds. He wills them to turn their eyes entirely on themselves ; to endeavour, with all earnestness, to labour for their own salvation ; and, with respect to the faults of others, *to have eyes and see not, to have ears and hear not*. The time appointed by his unerring justice, will come in due season, when the wicked will be summoned before his awful tribunal, and receive the punishment due to their evil works ; and therefore he wills that his chosen servants should not judge any one, before the time that is to decide his eternal doom.

These are the great objects of the Almighty. Let us be grateful for this his solicitude for the sanctification of our souls, and let us enter into the spirit of this command with all earnestness. Let us be severe towards ourselves, but mild and compassionate to others. Let us condemn ourselves, but never condemn others.

Rash judgment, however, is not merely criminal, but it is unreasonable in itself. For your instruction on this subject, I will bring forward the authorities upon which men pass sentence one upon another, and show you, that they are not authorities to be relied on by men of sound and impartial judgment.—In the first place, one of the most common autho-

rities, which induce a man to form a bad opinion of another, is *public report*. He has heard, that a person has committed such or such a crime ; that he has spoken such or such words ; that he is addicted to such or such a vice. Such an authority as this is feeble in the extreme, and judgment formed upon it would be rash indeed. I do not speak of those reports which have been sanctioned by the conviction of the delinquent, and which meet with general belief, but of the public reports of the day:—Reports, propagated by one or other of that numerous class, whose chief subject of conversation is the actions and failings of their neighbours. Of these reports I speak ; and we may say with truth, that seldom does a day pass but some or other of them reach our ear. To tales of this kind, no credit whatever ought to be given ; and the reason is, because they are, in general, either malicious falsehoods, or have arisen from misapprehensions, or have been related in a different manner from what truth requires, or have not been properly understood by the person who is our informer. Were we to trace one of these reports through all the windings of the channels by which it was conveyed to our ears, we should, in all probability, find that it was vitiated by one or other of these causes. Were we, for example, to take an exact account of the tale as it is related to us, then go to the person from whom our informant heard it, we should find a considerable altera-

tion, either in the substance of the tale, or in the manner of relating it. Were we to go again to the other, from whom this person heard it, and so on till we came to the original source from whence it came, we should find that the tale varied in many particulars, and even essentials, in the mouth of every one of them. After this, were we to compare the account given by the person from whom the tale proceeded, with the one we received from our first informant, we should find, that it had been so exaggerated and misrepresented, as hardly to be fit to be called the same story. In order, however, to render the examination complete, were we to go to the person himself, concerning whom the evil report had been raised, relate to him candidly all that we had heard, and request that he would give us a candid and particular account of the whole matter, we should, in all probability, find a greater difference between the tale and the truth, than we had hitherto discovered. Sometimes, we should find that the person knew nothing at all about it ; and consequently, that the whole was a fabrication, or that the story had been affixed to a wrong person. This I myself have experienced more than once. But when this is not the case, we should, most generally, hear the story from the accused told in such a different manner, accompanied with so many different circumstances, and justified by so many lawful motives, that we should not hesitate to declare, that had we given credit to

the tale as it was originally related to us, we should have injured the accused in our esteem most unjustly, and incurred the guilt of rash judgment.—I will allow, that many times there is too much reason for the evil reports that are spread abroad. But this is not always the case, nor is it generally the case, that the report is unaccompanied with exaggerations. Consequently, before we give credit to such reports, we ought to enter into examinations of this kind, or we expose ourselves to imminent danger of sin.

To enter into examinations of this kind, would, I acknowledge, be attended with many disagreeable occurrences, and few persons are there who would undertake it. But evil reports have been investigated in this manner, and the result has generally been as I have represented it. The following argument, therefore, may be drawn, and ought to be considered as conclusive: if investigation has proved, that reports are generally distorted by exaggerations and misrepresentations, every report ought to be investigated, before implicit credit be given to it: and if a person do not choose to make the requisite inquiries, he ought at least to reason thus with himself: “ Were I to trace this tale to its source, and hear what the accused had to say in his defence, I should probably find that the whole was either false, or distorted with falsehoods; and consequently, I am not justified in giving credit to it.”

Oh ! were all Christians to proceed or reason with themselves in this manner, how seldom would the crime of rash judgment be committed ! how speedily, and how effectually would the envenomed tongues of defamation and scandal be put to silence ! And yet, what is more reasonable, than that this method of proceeding should be followed ? We wish that it should be followed by others in respect to us, and what is more just, than that we should follow it in respect to others ? Frequently, indeed, it will happen, that the reports are upon such trivial subjects, that they are not worthy of inquiry. But, if they are not worthy of inquiry, they are not worthy of our notice ; and of course, it is unworthy of us to employ our thoughts, or to give our attention, to things of such little importance.

Sometimes, however, it will happen, that a person is eye-witness of the crime committed. When this is the case, it certainly is not rash judgment, to believe that the delinquent is guilty. But even on these occasions, the sentence of condemnation is to be passed with very great caution : for, although we witness the action, we know not the intention, upon which the criminality of the action depends. This intention is known only by the individual himself, and no other is in the secret, but that Great Being, who is the searcher of hearts.

On these occasions, therefore, it is our duty

to follow the rules which reason and charity prescribe. Reason tells us, that we ought not to set ourselves up as witnesses against our neighbour, unless we are required so to do. In things that are indifferent to us, in things where neither our own honour and character, nor that of others, is concerned, we have no reason to interfere. And if we have no reason to interfere, our interference is an intrusion. When, therefore, we are eye-witnesses of the transgression of a neighbour, and reason does not require that we should take cognizance of the affair, should we not be acting very improperly, were we to endeavour to dive into the secrets of his heart, and to ascertain the extent of his guilt? We ought, on those occasions, to leave the matter wholly to be settled between him and God; and be particularly cautious, not to defile our own souls, by passing a sentence of condemnation upon him, which we are not authorised to pass; and which, perhaps, he does not deserve.

When, however, it is our duty to take cognizance of the affair, and when the guilt incurred appears in such a clear light that it cannot be concealed, charity says, that we ought to lean to the favourable side, and to admit every palliation which justice will allow of. Now, as the criminality of the action depends, as I before remarked, not on the external act alone, but on the intention and will with which the act is performed, we are to admit the plea of

ignorance as frequently as we can; and to suppose, that the person would not have committed the crime, had he known the extent of the guilt. When, therefore, we witness a bad action in a neighbour ; (I do not mean an action which is essentially contrary to nature, and of the criminality of which no thinking man can be ignorant,) we ought to say to ourselves : “ I have no certainty, that this person knows that what he does is wrong, or that he has done it with a bad intention, or that he foresaw, that what he did or said would be injurious to his neighbour. I know not how far his knowledge of moral rectitude extends. This I know, that, with my knowledge, I should incur guilt by committing that action ; but as for him, there may be many reasons to exculpate him in the sight of God.” So many circumstances, therefore, being concealed from us, we ought to think favourably, and to prefer judging him to be more innocent than what he is, before attaching to him more criminality than what he deserves.

Again, according to the rules of Christian Charity, we ought to compassionate the failings of our neighbour, and to throw a veil over them, when it is that their criminality cannot be palliated. We all transgress in many things. We are all liable to transgress much oftener than we do : and it is to the grace of God alone that we are indebted for our preservation. When, therefore, we see that our *neighbour is overtaken in a fault*, instead of judging him with

harshness, *we ought to instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.* (Gal. vi. 1.) We ought to tremble at the sight of the infirmities of human nature, and pray with great earnestness to God, that he would not leave us in the same manner to the workings of our passions.

But, without calling in the aid of charity, justice itself requires, that we should not condemn our neighbour, although we know that he has wilfully transgressed. For, who can assure us that he continues obstinate in his sin? The Spirit breathes where he will, and consequently a man may be a sinner one hour, and a true penitent the next. Now, *a penitent sinner, the Almighty declares, he will never reject, a contrite and humble heart he will never despise.* (Ps. 1.) This being the case, would it not be an act of injustice, were we to treat as a criminal the man who is absolved from his crime? Oh! let us be very careful indeed, how we form an unfavourable opinion of our neighbour; for whether we hear evil of him, or whether we witness evil in him, we never can have sufficient authority to say to ourselves, that, at the moment we are speaking, he is a wicked man in the sight of God.

If, then, the guilt of rash judgment may be incurred even on those occasions, when the criminality of the person accused is manifest, what are we to think of the Christian who thinks evil of another on mere surmises! What

guilt does he incur, who concludes that his neighbour has committed sin, merely because he saw him in such a place, or with such a person ! who concludes that he has committed sin, merely because he heard a few words drop, as it were, by chance ! who concludes that he leads a sinful life, merely because he was once discovered in the act of committing sin ! In a word, what guilt does that Christian incur, who takes occasion, from the most trifling circumstances, to judge evil of those, who ought to be as dear to him as the apple of his eye ! Oh ! how opposite is this to the spirit of that gospel, which he pretends to follow, and by which he will hereafter be judged !

The disciples of the God of love are actuated by very different principles. They have learnt in the school of Jesus, that the true Christian thinketh no evil. They have learnt, that their fellow-creatures are not amenable to their tribunal : that they are the servants of God, before whose tribunal alone they are to stand or fall : and that, for them to take upon themselves the authority of condemning, let the evidence be what it will, is to usurp an authority, which belongs to the Almighty Sovereign alone.

But, my brethren, why judge at all ? What necessity is there that we pry into the faults of others ? What advantage shall we obtain, by watching those around us ? Will the faults of others cause us to be more on our guard ? or will they diminish, in the sight of God, the

guilt that we ourselves have contracted ? On the contrary, is it not calculated to produce a bad effect on our mind ? Will it not cause us to shut our eyes to our own defects, and instil into us a false confidence, and a vain presumption of our own perfections ?

Let us rather adopt a different mode of conduct. Our most important concern, is the salvation of our souls ; consequently, our greatest solicitude ought to be, to acquire a knowledge, and to embrace the means of attaining that object. Let us, therefore, watch our brethren, for the purpose of discovering their good qualities, and animating ourselves to piety by the example of their virtues. We stand in need of many incitements in the ways of piety : and nothing is better calculated to check our natural dispositions to sloth, than the contemplation of the good example of others. We may not perhaps find many within the circle of our acquaintance, who are perfect in every virtue, and free from every fault : nevertheless, we shall probably not find one, but who has something good in his character, and something edifying in one part or other of his conduct. Let us fix our attention on this something good and edifying, whatever it may be, and we shall receive profit from it. There is a virtue in every flower. Whatever noxious qualities it may contain, the bee extracts only the valuable sweets, and pays no attention to any thing beside. In the same manner, there is some-

thing praise-worthy in the character of almost every individual. In one, there is candour and sincerity :—in another, an abhorrence of untruths :—in another, a humble simplicity :—in another, a compassionate feeling for the distressed :—in another, a hatred of every species of injustice and dishonesty :—in another, an unwearied attention to labour, or to the duties of his state of life :—in another, a contempt of riches, and of wordly amusements :—in another, the spirit of prayer :—in another, the spirit of penance :—in another, an abhorrence of defamation and scandal :—in another, sobriety :—in another, temperance :—in another, chastity :—in another, meekness.—In a word, in almost every individual there will be found something worthy of our notice and imitation. Their vices are nothing to us. We shall not have to answer for them, unless by our own irregular conduct and bad example we have led them into sin. Their virtues may be of service to us. They are mirrors, as it were, placed before our eyes by a merciful Providence, in which we may behold the beauties of every virtue that can decorate the soul of man. Although they are scattered in many places, by the means of contemplation, they may be drawn to one point, and display before us the character of the true Christian in the clearest colours.

How hateful is the disposition of the man, whose eye is evil, who judges the worst of

every one, and who never sees in him any thing that is good! On the contrary, how amiable is the disposition of the true Christian, who sees good in every one, and shuts his eyes to every thing that is evil! A man of this disposition cannot be otherwise than esteemed and revered. Let it be your ambition, to imitate his example.—Then, if the honour and esteem of men be worth your notice, you will infallibly obtain it. These empty rewards, however, you will despise. You will be desirous only of meeting with the approbation of Him, who is the God of mercy and justice, and who has promised the most ample rewards to him who judgeth not unjustly.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

 ON THE LOVE OF GOD ABOVE ALL THINGS.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.

MATT. xxii. 37.

THIS, my brethren, is the great commandment of the New Law. This is the command, which comprises within itself all other commands. This is the command, which, if it be duly fulfilled, will lead us to the perfection of a Christian life. If we love God with our whole heart, and mind, and strength, we shall fulfil the law. If we do not love him with our whole heart, and mind, and strength, our religion is deficient, and our piety imperfect. The love of God, if we are truly animated by its influences, will season all our actions, and cause them to ascend in the odour of sweetness before the throne of him, whom we love. The love of God will assimilate us, in a certain degree, to those heavenly spirits, who are immersed in the ocean of the Divinity,

and whose only occupation is love. The love of God will make us submissive in adversity, and humble in prosperity:—patient in sickness, and penitent in health:—joyful in suffering, and mortified in the midst of pleasure. And the reason is, because the love of God is so congenial to the finest feelings of the heart of man, and is attended with such ineffable consolations, that the soul which has once tasted of its delights, will feel no pleasure in any earthly enjoyments, which are not in unison with that love, nor will she follow any will in opposition to the will of Him whom she loves.

To discourse, in an appropriate manner, on this supereminent virtue of the love of God, is far above the powers of man, during the time of his abode on earth. Surrounded, as we are, by the *body of this death*, and liable to be continually imposed upon by the false glare of worldly vanities, we cannot fix our eye on the majesty of God, in such a manner as to discern the infinity of his perfections: we cannot see God as he is; and therefore we cannot describe, in just terms, how worthy he is of our love. This incapacity, however, is not a sufficient reason why we should pass over the subject in silence. It only proves that the subject is inexhaustible, and that it cannot be too often the theme of our instructions, and the matter of your meditations.

The God, whom we are commanded to love, is the great—the eternal—the omnipotent—

the incomprehensible Lord of all. It is the God who made this world and all that it contains. It is the God, before whom all created things are, as it were, nothing. It is the God, who dwells in inaccessible light, the terrors of whose majesty are so great, that it would be impossible for mortal man to endure the weight of his presence. It is the God, who, notwithstanding his awful majesty, is infinitely amiable, and who, notwithstanding our littleness and misery, entertains an unspeakable love for us.

This is the God, whom we are commanded to love: and can we flatter ourselves that we duly appreciate the value of this command? If the Deity had done nothing more than reveal to us a knowledge of himself, and of the nature of his adorable perfections, it would have been a sufficient cause for our gratitude; for even this is a blessing which is not enjoyed by millions of our fellow-creatures. But, that he should love us, and that he should command us to love Him, oh! this is a blessing, truly wonderful! When we reflect on the incomprehensible infinity of this great Creator,—when we contemplate the awful majesty of this King of kings, and Lord of lords,—when we behold, with the eyes of faith, the powers of heaven trembling, and the whole celestial host of myriads of Cherubim, and Seraphim, and Angels, and Saints, prostrate before his throne, what must we think of that gracious command, by

which such weak—such wretched—such rebellious creatures as we are, are required to love him? What greater condescension could there be on the part of God? What greater honour could there be conferred on man? What more noble object could there be for our ambition? What more powerful cause could there be, to induce us to exert every power of our souls? By loving God, we enjoy the greatest happiness that can be enjoyed by man in this world. By loving God, we love every thing that is great, every thing that is desirable, every thing that is amiable; because God is the great All, and compared with Him, every thing else is nothing.

It is to no purpose to look to the world for subjects of enjoyment, which are not to be found in him. Every thing is in him, and by enjoying him, we enjoy all things: not, indeed, in that carnal and sensual manner, in which worldlings imagine that enjoyments solely consist, but, in the feelings of the mind, those pleasing sensations of interior joy and gladness, in which alone true pleasure consists. The worldling may talk of the enjoyment that is to be found in riches, extended possessions, sensual gratifications, dissipating amusements. The worldling may feel a certain kind of pleasure in such things. But, what will that pleasure be? An enjoyment of a moment—an enjoyment embittered by anxiety, solicitude, weariness, and oftentimes remorse. Whereas, the

enjoyment that is to be found in the love of God, is congenial to the finest feelings of the soul, is free from every alloy, is certain and permanent. Oh ! to enjoy the love and friendship of the God of heaven, to enjoy a foretaste of the happiness, which constitutes the felicity of the blessed above, what more can the heart of man look for, or desire !

The worldling may talk of the pleasures which are to be found in the society of friends, during the cheerful hours which are unoccupied by business. Those moments are certainly pleasing, and may be spent in innocent conviviality. But if there be a certain pleasure in the society of poor weak mortals, merely because there is a friendship existing between them, what enjoyment must there be in the society and friendship of Him, who is amiable above the children of men ! He can cause our souls to overflow with transports of the most inexpressible delight. He can communicate himself to us in such a manner, as to cause us to feel a disgust for all earthly things, by the supereminent consolations of his love ; he can absorb the powers of our souls to that degree, as to cause us to feel as if we were seated with the angels and saints, contemplating with them, the perfections of his amiable and adorable attributes. This is what we enjoy, when we enjoy his society and friendship. We enjoy him who is our only good : we enjoy him, who alone can fill the vast capacity of our souls.

The worldling may talk of the great delight that is found, in the enjoyment of those who are nearly related to him, and who are particular objects of his affections. But, if the soul of man is inflamed with love for a tender parent, an amiable spouse, endearing children, with what love may it not be inflamed for Him, who possesses in himself every thing that is to be found either in parent, spouse, or children :— who possesses every thing that is worthy of our affections in the most supereminent degree!

But, in the enjoyments, which the world holds out to its deluded followers, we must always bear in mind that, according to universal experience, they are liable to many interruptions, and that every pleasure is mixed up with bitterness. What enjoyment can the boasting of riches bring us, when we are laid on the bed of sickness, or when constant ill health deprives us of every relish for worldly amusements? What enjoyment is there to be found in eating and drinking, when it is that we feel a loathing for every thing that nature does not absolutely require? What pleasure is there arising from the society of those whom we love, when one or more of them is snatched away from us by death? Or what pleasure do we receive from our communications with them, setting aside the pleasure arising from doing an act of charity, when we visit them on the bed of sickness, or when we endeavour to comfort them in the midst of affliction, or when we see them

reduced to poverty and misery ? Oh! the enjoyment that their company used to afford us, is then turned into sorrow ; and our sympathising sufferings are great in proportion to our love.—But in the love and friendship of God, there is nothing of all this. The enjoyment is permanent and tranquil. God is unchangeable : nothing can happen to him that can prevent our communication with him, even for one instant. What he was yesterday, that he is to-day, and will be to-morrow. Our love will suffer no diminution by constant enjoyment : it will be always new : it will be always increasing.

Again, it may be said, that the society and enjoyment of worldly friends has much alloy mixed with it, even when in the midst of prosperity. It cloyes after it has been long enjoyed. There must be interruptions in order to make it pleasing. Friendship is increased by absence. It is not unfrequent that the whole pleasure is destroyed by sudden disputes, which originate in nothing, and end in quarrels and hatred. At best, it is a casual pleasure, and depends on the uneven temper, and capricious disposition of man.—But the pleasure arising from the love and friendship of God is totally different. He is always present with us, and his society never cloyes. Absence is not necessary to increase the pleasure. The more he is enjoyed, the more exquisite is the enjoyment. There is no unevenness of temper with him. All is

uniform:—all is calm:—all is new:—all is exquisitely delightful. In the same manner as the blessed in heaven are eternally inebriated with the pleasures of his presence, so likewise, although in a less degree, is the faithful soul on earth inebriated, as it were, with the delights of his spiritual presence within her, and dreads nothing so much, as being separated from him, even for one instant. Oh! my brethren, may our souls enjoy the transports of this holy love! Then shall we exclaim, with the Royal Prophet: *One day spent in thy house, O Lord, is better than a thousand spent in the tabernacles of sinners.* (Ps. lxxxiii.) Then shall we *ardently sigh after the courts of the Lord.* (Ibid.) Then shall we wish to be dissolved, that we might enjoy *Him* face to face, whose invisible presence is attended with such ineffable delights.

When a christian soul is animated with these sentiments, how feelingly is she convinced of the emptiness and vanity of earthly pleasures and possessions! She has discovered the source of true enjoyment, and there alone does she seek after it. The love of God is her delight. This divine love is her weight, as St. Augustine expresses it, by that is she carried, whithersoever she is carried. This love she acquired free-cost, and she enjoys it without solicitude. This love administers to her ease in pain, and consolation in affliction. It banishes from her mind the anguish of remorse, and the anxieties of care. It causes her to walk in all the

commandments of God with ease, and to fulfil his holy will with gladness. It diffuses over her whole interior the sweets of innocence, and draws her near to God, the boundless ocean of all good.

Oh ! my brethren, truly may we say, that the love of God is a treasure indeed—a treasure, far surpassing in value all other treasures. Yes : it is a treasure, that the wicked shall never possess ;—a happiness, which the world shall never impart to its deluded followers.—Worldlings describe the pleasures which are to be enjoyed in this land of exile, in the most inviting strains. They paint the charms of sensual love, in the most glowing colours. In what strains of eloquence, therefore, ought not those ineffable delights to be described, which are a foretaste of the happiness of the blessed above ! What is this world ! what are its pleasures ! What are its charms, when compared with God ! All these things are the work of his hands,—an imperfect sample of the power of his omnipotence. In the formation of them he was pleased to follow the dictates of his love for man, and he made them pleasing and agreeable, in order to cheer the gloomy paths of his pilgrimage. But he never intended them as the only channels through which consolations were to be derived. He made them pleasing and agreeable, he made them grand and sublime, for the purpose that man should be induced to contemplate the perfections of

the great Creator of them, and by the means of contemplation, to raise up his heart, and fix his affections on him. He willed him to reason in the following manner: "If a certain degree of pleasure is to be found in the enjoyment of created things, which, notwithstanding their magnificence and grandeur, are nothing when compared with the Almighty, what ineffable delights must be experienced in the enjoyment of the Creator himself! If mere dust and ashes can impart a certain kind of satisfaction, what ecstatic transports cannot He impart, who is self-existent, eternal, and omnipotent in his love! Truly, such delights must be far beyond any thing that I have hitherto experienced. On him, therefore, I will fix my affections. I will not squander away my love on objects of inferior notice; but I will give the whole of it to him, who presents himself before me, and declares his readiness to fill the whole capacity of my soul, and to give me himself." Truly, my brethren, the sweets of the love of God are far beyond the powers of man to describe, or to appreciate. "O wonderful beneficence!" exclaimed the pious St. Thomas de Villanova, "God promises us heaven for the recompense of his love. Is not his love itself a great reward!—a blessing, the most desirable, the most amiable, and the most sweet! Yet, a recompense, and so immense a recompense further waits upon it. What an excess of goodness! God gives us his love; and for this, his love, he

bestows on us paradise ! Such, and so great is his love, that, to obtain it, all torments and fatigues ought joyfully to be endured. Yet, **this** he bestows on us free-cost ; and then gives heaven for its reward ! Oh ! how inexcusable am I, if I do not love thee, my God ! for thou givest thy love to all who desire, or ask for it."

Many of you, and perhaps, the greater number of you, may say, that you never felt any thing of this ineffable delight, or of these glowing sentiments, in the love and service of God : that you live up to your religion, that you are attentive to your usual prayers, regular at the public service of the Church, and due frequenters of the sacraments, and, nevertheless, that you never felt that extraordinary relish in the performance of any of them. Now to what is this to be attributed ?—I reply, that the reason why you have not tasted these sweets of the love of God, is, in all probability, because you have not loved God in a proper manner. His love is like a fire in the soul : it must burn : it must blaze forth : it must produce its effects. I do not say, that, unless the soul is all on fire with divine love, or the heart glowing with that warmth of devotion, which the saints experienced, no love at all exists within you. But my meaning is, that, if you feel no satisfaction in the performance of your exercises of piety, and that this is owing to an inordinate attachment to creatures, then, that there is a deficiency of the love of God. We will examine, however, the

nature of the love of God, as described in the words of my text, and then each one may judge for himself, whether he is deficient or not.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the nature of the love, which is required of us. We must love him with our whole heart: that is, we must give our whole heart to him; we must allow him to reign there without control, and without a rival.—

We must love him with our whole soul: that is, we must devote our whole soul to his holy service; our understanding must be directed into the ways of truth, by the light of divine love:—our memory must be ever recollected in him, and our affections and desires must be directed and guided by divine love:—our will, likewise, must be in a particular manner, wholly and entirely consecrated to him, so as to seek his holy will in all things, and to be ever subservient to it in prosperity and adversity, in sickness and health, in life and death.—

We must love him with our whole mind; that is, our thoughts must be fixed on him by frequent consideration and recollection: we must meditate on his holy law: we must walk with him by constant attention to his divine presence.

—Lastly, we must love him with our whole strength: that is, all our words and actions must be regulated by the love of God: we must aim at perfection, and endeavour to sanctify our ordinary actions, by performing them for

God, and with the intention of pleasing him : in a particular manner, we must not suffer any trifling excuses of self-interest, or pleasure, to prevent us from attending to the public worship of God, and performing all other spiritual duties.

This is the nature of the command of divine love, which is imposed upon us. Had we fulfilled it hitherto, in the perfect manner in which the saints fulfilled it, the sweets of divine love would not have been withheld from us. We should have been inebriated with the torrent of his delights, and our only solicitude at this moment would be to encrease in this holy love, and to make ourselves more and more acceptable in the eyes of Him, who alone is worthy of our love.—If we do not experience any thing of this kind, let us enter into ourselves without delay, and endeavour to ascertain the cause. For, although we are not required to attain to the same degree of perfection in every virtue, as the saints have done, we are, nevertheless, equally obliged with them, to love God with our whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. This virtue is not a matter of counsel, it is of strict obligation, and it must be fulfilled. Let us, then, enter seriously into ourselves, and ascertain whether we have not too much of the love of the world, too much of the love of creatures, too much of the love of self-interest, or too much of the love of ease and sensual enjoyments. Whatever it may be that

engages our affections, let us renounce it without delay. Let us be convinced that our first and greatest duty, is to love God above all things, and that no power on earth can absolve us from the obligation of fulfilling it. Let us be convinced that we are not allowed to fix our affections on any thing in this world, to the prejudice of the love of God. In a word, let us be convinced that God is every thing to us, and that, without him, all things else are nothing. Yes, my brethren, let us be convinced of this, and let us exert every power of our souls, to fulfil this most essential of all duties.

Let us not be dismayed at the idea that the work is difficult. It is no such thing. Love is the most natural, the most pleasing employment of the mind. The soul is made for love. The fond mother finds no difficulty in loving the tender offspring of her womb : it is no hard task to her to attend to it, and to promote its welfare in all things. And the reason is, because there is nothing in the world that she loves in preference to it. The saints found no difficulty in loving God above all things : this love was their greatest comfort, their greatest joy and delight : and the reason was, because they disengaged their affections from earthly things, and loved nothing in preference to the will of their Lord and Master.

We, my brethren, have it in our power to do what they did. God will help us, in the same manner as he helped them. Let us only begin

in earnest. We have every encouragement. It is divine love that is to make us perfect Christians. It is this love that is to make us acceptable in the sight of God. It is this love that is to make us happy during the time of our earthly abode. And it is this love that is to purchase for us, every thing that is valuable in the abodes of Sion. With encouragements like these, let us begin without delay : and then we may confidently expect all blessings from Him, who is the God of love. We shall soon begin to experience the consolations, which are enjoyed by all the true lovers of God ; and then, our only desires will be to drink deeper of the cup of those pure delights, and we shall not be satiated until such time as we are immersed in the immense ocean of divine love, in a happy eternity.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

SUFFERINGS THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN.

*Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy :
Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

MATT. ix. 2.

IN the gospel of this day we read, that our Blessed Saviour imparted to the sick man the remission of his sins, previous to his healing him of his corporal infirmities. This was a preliminary step towards his cure, and, as it were, a removal of the cause of his affliction. Our Lord himself informs us that this was his motive, in the words which almost immediately follow : *Whether is it easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, arise, and walk ? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power to forgive sins, then saith he to the man sick of the palsy : Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.* His sins were the principal cause of his infirmities. This cause being removed, by the forgiveness imparted to him,

the restoration of his corporal health immediately ensued, at the command of Jesus.

From this passage, my brethren, we have authority to say, that sin is the great cause of all the evils to which human nature is subject. Had not the guilt of sin been entailed upon us by our first parents, we should not have been included in the sentence which was pronounced upon them: we should have experienced no evils, until, by our own actual transgressions, we had rendered ourselves deserving objects of the indignation of heaven. Then, and not till then, his judgments would have fallen upon us, and those judgments would have been severe, in proportion to the enormity of our transgressions. Having, however, incurred the guilt of our first parents, and having likewise incurred an additional and more criminal guilt by our own actual offences, there can be no wonder, that the life of man is a life of suffering.— Yes, my brethren, sin is the cause of all our woe. By it, we have rendered ourselves deserving of punishment; and by the patient endurance of punishment it is, that we are to accomplish the ends of divine justice. A few reflections on this subject will contribute to hush the murmurs of complaint, which too often escape from the lips of the suffering Christian; and will, I trust, be an inducement to you all, to endure with calm resignation, and patient tranquillity, the afflictions, of whatever kind

they may be, which the dispensations of the Almighty may allot to you.

In these latter times, when almost every article of the Christian Faith is impugned, except that of believing in the existence of a Supreme Being, and when almost all the consoling doctrines of the Christian Religion are called in question, by men who pretend to be followers of the Christian rule, a subject of this kind is particularly deserving of your attention. At all times, we stand in need of interior consolation, in order to cheer the paths of our pilgrimage : but never do we stand more in need of it, than when in the midst of suffering and affliction. Unless the mind be supported and held up, in these times of trial, by considerations of a very powerful kind, it will sink into a state of despondency and impatience. Now the conviction, that sufferings are our due, and that the patient endurance of sufferings, in the spirit of penance, and for the love of God, will purchase for us an eternal weight of glory, is a consideration calculated to work powerfully on the mind of man, whose most prevailing passion is self-love, and to soothe the irritation which suffering naturally causes, in hopes of a complete indemnity hereafter.

The pure love of benevolence, or the love of God for his own infinite perfections, without any reference to his love for us, will undoubtedly still every tumult in the breast of the Christian who is animated with that love, and

cause him to endure, not only patiently, but with gladness, every affliction and pain, without a prospect of a reward. But where is this love to be found? Even St. Paul, notwithstanding his ardent love for his God, derived comfort in his sufferings, from the consideration of future rewards : *for the rest, he says, there is reserved for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will on that day restore to me.* (2 Tim. iv.)

Such being our nature, what inducement shall we have to patient suffering, or what comfort shall we have in the midst of affliction, if the prospect of a reward be taken away? Although it would be most pleasing to the feelings of self-love, to be told, that Christ has paid our ransom by his blood in such a manner, as that nothing is required of us; that we have only to accept the acquittance proffered, and to enjoy ourselves in ease and pleasure, as far as circumstances will allow: although it would be gratifying to human nature, to hear that works of penance were not necessary, in order to satisfy the injured justice of God, but that, on the contrary, they would be derogatory to the mercies of our Redeemer, and take away from the all-sufficiency of the merits of his passion: yet, what consolation should we derive from it, when in the midst of sufferings, either of body or mind? Such doctrine, I allow, would be pleasing, when in the midst of health and gaiety, and would effectually induce us to avoid every act of

voluntary self-denial for the love of God. But when visited with pains, and losses, and contradictions, and persecutions, it would be calculated to produce a contrary effect. It would lead to impatience, and not to patience ; to murmuring, and not to resignation. It would authorise us, in some measure, to expostulate with the Lord, and say : “ Why dost thou so sorely afflict me ? and why is thy hand laid so heavily upon me ? What demand hast thou upon me ? My ransom is paid : and my acquittance is the blood of my Saviour. I believe in thee, and I put my whole trust in thee : what more dost thou require ? Was any good to be derived from my sufferings, I would willingly endure them. But they will neither contribute to satisfy thy justice, nor will they entitle me to a reward. Consequently, I have reason to say, that I suffer unjustly, without a cause, and without effect : and is this consistent with thy attributes of infinite justice, and infinite love ? ” — We should be, my brethren, in some degree, authorised to expostulate with the Almighty in this manner. But how blasphemous would such language be ! how universally would it condemn the ordinary ways of Providence to men ! Never may such doctrines find admission into our breasts !

It is true, indeed, that Christ has paid our ransom. But he has suffered for us, not to exempt us from suffering, but that we should suffer with him. He has blotted out the hand-

writing that was against us : he has opened the gates of heaven : he has laid up an immense store of merits, which he is ready to impart to us : he is become our great Mediator, and is always ready to appear in our behalf before his Father : in a word, what more could he do for his people, which he has not done ? But he has not exempted us from the duty of a faithful co-operation. We are, in this respect, the same as we should have been, had he not suffered for us at all. There is only this difference that, had he not suffered for us, our works of atonement would never have found acceptance with God, and would never have been sufficient to satisfy for the least offence ; but, now that he has suffered for us, they are acceptable to him, and may be made sufficient to satisfy his justice, even for the most criminal and multiplied transgressions, when united with, and sanctified by his merits.

Seeing, therefore, my brethren, that sufferings are necessary for us, and seeing that they are available to the most beneficial purposes, when sanctified by the merits of Christ, even to the escaping the inexpressible, the eternal, and the unavailable sufferings, which await unrepenting sinners in another world, what abundant reasons have we to return thanks to Providence for imposing them on us. Were we left entirely to ourselves, as to works of mortification and penance, we should probably do but little to satisfy the justice of God : self-love

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maintains such influence over us, and ease and enjoyment have such attractive charms, that, if God did not chastise us without our consent, we should never have resolution sufficient to chastise ourselves in the manner that our sins deserve. The general ways of men prove, but too truly, that this is the case. Who is there, that does not endeavour to remove every cause of uneasiness, and every pain? Who is there, that does not enjoy, or long to enjoy, the blessings of health and peace? Who is there that takes a pleasure in suffering, or that seeks to impose additional mortifications on himself, beyond what the Church imposes? Or, in fact, we may say, who is there, that complies with the restraints on the sensual appetite, which the Church imposes, with due exactness, and without complaint?—Ah! if God, in his infinite mercy, did not oblige us to suffer, we never should, judging from the ways of men, court sufferings of our own accord; or at least, we never should voluntarily subject ourselves to pay the whole of that debt of punishment, which the justice of God requires from us. We should leave it for another world: and then, we should have to suffer the whole weight of the justice of God, without any alleviation from the merits of Christ: we should be cast into prison, from which we should not be released until we had paid the last farthing. (*Matt. v.*)

Happy for us, therefore, is it, that we are visited with afflictions. They are blessings from the hands of God; let us receive them

with thanksgiving. Our benevolent Father has declared, that *he chastiseth those whom he loves*. (Heb. xii.) Why not, therefore, submit cheerfully and gladly to his ordinances? He knows what is expedient for us; and he will not afflict us in any other manner, than he sees will be expedient for our eternal welfare. Like an experienced physician, he examines our spiritual wounds, and he applies no other remedies than what he knows will contribute to our cure. We cannot, indeed, scrutinize his ways. We cannot ascertain the reasons, which induce him to send us one kind of affliction in preference to another. We only know that he is infinitely wise, and that he is infinitely good. This knowledge is as much as is necessary for us. This is sufficient to prove to us, that we may, with confidence, place unlimited reliance on him; and that, if we wish to consult our own good, we ought to submit our will entirely to his.

If, therefore, he is pleased to visit us with constant, or only temporary pains of body, we are authorised to believe, that that species of punishment is selected, because it is most expedient for us. If he visit us with painful or loathsome diseases, it is our duty to suppose, that that species of chastisement is more expedient for us, than any we could choose for ourselves. If he visit us with adversity, and cause us to experience losses and disappointments,—if he visit us with contradictions, and affronts, and injuries, and loss of honour and reputa-

tion ;—or if it be with domestic calamities, disturbances at home, ill-treatment from a husband, ill-behaviour of children, coolness from friends, and the like, it is our duty to believe, that this all-wise and all-good God selects that particular species of punishment, as being the one which will be the most beneficial to us, either for the removal of our affections from the world, or as the most effectual to make satisfaction for the sins we have already committed.

—Oh ! if we were all influenced by these religious considerations, how cheerfully should we endure what are called the evils of life ! How readily should we submit to them, when we were convinced that we either merited them, by the nature of our offences, or that they were adapted to the peculiarity of our disorders, or that they were calculated to facilitate the means of acquiring those virtues, of which we stand most in need. Yes, my brethren, we may rest assured, that all our afflictions, be they what they may, are all prescriptions, applied to our souls as remedies by that great Physician, who perfectly understands our complaints, who is acquainted with the certain means of cure, and whose tenderness and love will not allow him to torment us unnecessarily.

—Had we any serious cause for alarm, it would be, lest he should restrain his arm,—lest he should not visit us with those severe afflictions and losses, which are to separate us, in affection, from the things of this world,—lest

he should spare us in this world for the sole purpose of hurling on our heads hereafter, in the world to come, the full weight of his justice.—Truly may we say, that they only have cause to be alarmed, who, conscious of having contracted the guilt of sin, have little, or nothing to suffer:—whose hearts are fixed on this world, who sigh after riches and possessions, and who are not visited with losses and disappointments, or whose only sufferings are caused by their own ill-tempers, or over anxious solitudes.—They, again, have cause to be alarmed, who are puffed up with vanity and pride, and meet with few, or no humiliations:—who are of a harsh, stubborn, and capricious temper, and meet with few, or no contradictions and affronts:—who are imperious, haughty, overbearing, and tyrannical, at home, and who experience no contradiction from wife, or disobedience from children.—They, in a word, only have cause to be alarmed, who do not receive from the hands of Providence, the application of remedies, which are calculated to cure their spiritual infirmities. They have reason to fear, lest the severity of God's judgments should be reserved for them in another world. But, as for those, who experience from the hands of God long and severe afflictions, who are continually in one trouble or another, in one kind of pain or another, who are continually struggling with adversity, and to whom the world is no source of enjoyment, they have

reason to rejoice ; they have reason to comfort themselves with the assurance, that their heavenly Physician is applying to their souls those remedies, which are to heal their wounds, and to prepare them for admittance into those mansions, where no unclean thing can enter.— They, I say, have reason to rejoice, and their only solicitude ought to be, lest they should not correspond with these blessings; and by impatience and want of resignation forfeit the benefits, which they are intended to impart to their souls.

Too frequent indeed it is, that we hear the murmurs and complaints of those who are favoured by Providence in this manner. These people lose all the merit that it was in their power to acquire : and instead of offering up to God a sacrifice of atonement, they render themselves more criminal in his sight by the abuse of these blessings. Now what can be more irrational ? They are obliged to suffer : and by impatience under these sufferings, they are bringing down additional evils on their heads. — Some indeed will say, that their afflictions are greater than they can endure : and others, that they are greater than they deserve. With respect to the first, it must be granted that human weakness may easily be overpowered. But, with the assistance of the grace of God, human nature is capable of enduring with patience the greatest afflictions, the severest torments : and this grace the Almighty is ready

to give to those, who earnestly apply for it, and who lead pious and holy lives.—But, as for those who imagine that their afflictions are greater than their deserts, they have very erroneous ideas of the enormity of sin, of the debt of punishment incurred by it, and of the justice of God. Sin, even the most trivial sin, the slightest act of disobedience, is so offensive to the sanctity of God, that a whole life of suffering, independently of the merits of Christ, would not be an adequate satisfaction to the justice of God. One only mortal sin, we will say, the sin of our first parents, was so odious, so enormous in his sight, that all the sufferings which all mankind were capable of enduring, could never satisfy the divine justice for it ; it required nothing less than the blood of the Redeemer himself. If, therefore, you are conscious to yourselves, that you have been guilty of the crime of mortal sin, were it only once in your lives, is it possible that your sufferings can be too great? Are you not mercifully dealt with, that God should vouchsafe to receive satisfaction at your hands? Ought you not to rejoice so much the more in proportion to the greatness of the satisfaction, which you are enabled to offer?—Oh! let no complaints of this nature ever escape your lips. To accuse God of treating you with undue severity, would be accusing him of injustice, which would be nothing less than blasphemy.

Since God, therefore, does not chastise you

beyond what you deserve, why should you complain? Since he is ready to impart to you, sufficient grace and strength to enable you to endure them with resignation, what excuse can you have, if you sink under them, and, by your murmurings, fly in the face of his providence? And since, by means of these sufferings, when sanctified by the merits of Christ, you may escape the torments of the world to come, what title have you to boast of your reason and religion, if you lament your hard lot, and prefer the condition of those who live without suffering, at the risk of having the whole debt of satisfaction to pay hereafter?

My brethren, act like men, and like Christians. Seek consolation, in your afflictions, where it is to be found. Seek it in submission to the will of God, and in patience, for in patience shall you possess your souls. Be convinced that your cross is proportionate to your shoulders; and that you deserve still more than what you endure. Comfort yourselves with the assurance, that your present sufferings will have an end, sooner or later, and that the time will come, when you will be called upon to rejoice. Remember that the sufferings of this world, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in you; and that they are blessed who mourn here, because they shall be comforted hereafter.

Instead of giving way, therefore, to impatience, think of your sins, and of what you have

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deserved by them. Let it be your endeavour to reconcile yourselves to God, by sincere repentance. Let it be your principal desire, to wash away the guilt that you contracted by them; and then throw yourselves into the arms of God, with a readiness of mind to endure all the chastisement, that he is pleased to inflict upon you.—If it should be his will to remove your afflictions, at the time that he is pleased to forgive you your sins, although such an indulgence is seldom or never to be looked for, be grateful to him for his mercies. But, if he still continue to inflict the scourge, even after that happy reconciliation has taken place, be assured, that he has his reasons for it; and that these reasons are founded on infinite wisdom, and goodness, and justice. Let this be your conduct, and then you will experience comparative comfort in this life, and hereafter you will be feelingly convinced that *the sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you.* (Rom. viii.)

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE VICE OF LYING.

Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth, every man with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

EPH. iv. 25.

THE Apostle, in the words of my text, reprobates a vice, the malignity and consequences of which, are seldom seriously considered:—it is the vice of *lying*. To explain to you the nature of this vice, it will be only necessary to give you the definition of it, with a few explanatory remarks. A lie, is *an assertion contrary to the truth, expressed by words or actions, and made with the intention of deceiving another*. According to this definition, a person must know, that what he says is false. If he make an assertion, and at the time is *bona fide* convinced it is true, it is no lie in him, although it should afterwards prove to be a falsehood. It would be merely a mistake, unless it was that the person spoke at random, or accused his neighbour, without previously

examining into the truth of his accusation.— Again, according to this definition, a person must have an intention of deceiving another. When the plain meaning of any thing that we say is not according to truth, but we know that the person, to whom we are speaking, will understand it according to the meaning which we affix to it in our mind: or when the falsity of a tale is so manifest, that we know no person of common understanding would give credit to it, and we relate it merely for the purpose of exciting mirth, we do not incur the guilt of a lie. The intention of deceiving, is a necessary ingredient of a criminal lie, and whether we assert it by a downright falsehood, or by an equivocation, the guilt is the same.

The enormity of this offence is proportioned to the nature of the lie. The greatest offence of this kind against God, that we can commit, is to deny God, and to impugn or resist the truths of God, knowing them to be his truths.— The greatest offence of this kind against ourselves, that we can commit, is to impose on the minister of God, in the tribunal of penance, by denying or concealing our offences.—And the greatest crime of this kind against our neighbour, that we can commit, is to bear false witness against him in a court of justice, by incurring the guilt of perjury. All these are offences of the most enormous kind. They are lies, which we hold in abhorrence. They are lies, which we do not frequently witness.

Again, there are lies of a less enormous kind, and which are more or less criminal in proportion to the effects arising from them. Lies of calumny and slander, or lies, by which we accuse our neighbour wrongfully, and knowingly, of crimes that he never committed, are criminal more or less, in proportion to the injury which he received, or which we intended that he should receive. Lies of pride, or vain boasting, although no harm may be intended towards another, are criminal in proportion to the complacency which we feel within ourselves, from the unmerited esteem which we obtain, or which we imagine to have obtained. Lies of envy, by which we endeavour to lessen the reputation of others, on account of their superior merits, or their superior success in temporal things, or on account of any excellence or advantage which they possess superior to us, are criminal in proportion to the malignity of our intentions, or the baseness of our endeavours.—Lies of excuse, are criminal in proportion to the bad effects arising from them. —Lies of fraud, or deceit, are criminal in proportion to the injustice which we intended that our neighbour should receive. And jocose lies, or lies that are told merely for the sake of merriment, without any intention, and without any probability of doing injury to any one, are criminal in proportion to the little account that we make of offending God by venial sin.—These are the principal and most general kinds

of lies ; varying in their malignity and criminality, according to the dispositions of the transgressor, and to the bad effects which he intended to produce. They may be mortal, or they may be only venial sins ; but this will depend entirely on the circumstances, which cause them to be told. The generality of Christians, I am convinced, make light of telling a lie, I mean a falsehood told for the purpose of deceiving, although on a trivial subject, yet, when it is considered, that not even the Almighty himself could authorise a person to tell a lie, or to equivocate, which is the same as a lie, were it even to save the whole world, the importance of this subject must appear in its true light.—I will, therefore, for your instruction, and for the purpose of exciting in your minds a hatred of this vice, describe to you, the severe terms in which this vice is condemned by the spirit of God, both in the Old and New Testament, and the abhorrence in which it is held by men, even carnal and worldly men. But let it be remarked, that, in proportion to the enormity or malice of the lie, so much must the severity of the words of scripture, or the blind, indiscriminate condemnation of worldlings be affixed to it.

In the first place, I will call your attention to the severe condemnation of the vice of lying, which has been pronounced by the spirit of God, in the inspired writings. Pay particular attention to them, for they are the words of

Him, who is essentially the God of truth, and they are the words of the law, by which we shall hereafter be judged.—Truth, is essentially one of the attributes of the Divinity. Consequently, every thing, that is contrary to truth, is essentially contrary to that attribute, however trivial it may be. By the mouth of the Wise Man, he says : *there are six things which the Lord hateth, and the seventh, his soul detesteth : haughty eyes, a lying tongue . . . a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren* (Prov. vi.) And c. xii. *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* These, my brethren, are severe words. But they are words proceeding from the lips of truth itself. Notice the expressions : *the Lord hateth a lying tongue, and the deceitful witness that uttereth lies :—lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* Such expressions as these, are not affixed to trivial offences : they denote crimes, which are held in abhorrence by the God of justice.—Again, in c. xix. of the same book : *he that speaketh lies shall perish :—c. xxi. he that gathereth treasures by a lying tongue, is vain and foolish, and shall stumble on the snares of death . . . a lying witness shall perish. The mouth that believeth, killeth the soul.* (Wisd. i. 11.) The Royal Prophet, in the fifth Psalm, says : *Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.*—These, my brethren, are severe threats. In the inspired writings we read not of comminations and threats uttered against trivial offenders. The severity of the threats,

is always proportioned to the enormity of the offence. When, therefore, it is said, that the person who doth such or such a thing *shall perish*—that *he shall stumble on the snares of death*—that *he shall be destroyed*, it indicates that the offence is capital in its nature, and that its punishment, in another world, will be everlasting. Oh ! my brethren, if our conscience accuse us of being addicted to the vice of lying, what serious cause have we to be alarmed ! What motives have we to pray, in the words of the Wise Man : *two things have I asked of thee, O Lord, deny them not to me, before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lying words.* (Prov. xxx.)

The words of the Spirit of Truth against this detested vice, in the New Testament, are not less severe than the sentences which I have quoted from the Bible, or Old Testament. St. Paul says, (Col. iii.) *Lie not one to another.* Our blessed Saviour, speaking to the unbelieving Jews, lays this vice to their charge, as a crime of the most serious kind : (John viii.) *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own : for he is a liar, and the father thereof.* And the words of my text : *wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.*—The threats, likewise, denounced against this vice in the book of the

New Testament, are, like those in the Old Law, threats of eternal reprobation. St. John, in the book of Revelations, (Apoc. xxi. 27.) after having given a description of the New Jerusalem, or kingdom of God in heaven, says : *there shall not enter into it any thing defiled, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.* And in the next chapter ; *blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates of the city. Without, are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth, and maketh a lie.* Oh! my brethren, these are words particularly deserving of your attention. The Christian that *loveth, and maketh a lie*, is ranked with *dogs and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and idolaters!* Can any language be stronger than this? Can any vice be reprobated in more severe terms? Is there any vice that is threatened with more terrible judgments in another world? Truly may we say, in the words of the Wise Man, above quoted: *the mouth that believeth, killeth the soul.* (Wisd. i. 2.)

In this description, there is nothing exaggerated. No flowers of speech, no rhetorical arguments have been employed, to conceal the true state of the question, or to throw over it a false colouring. The whole is taken from the unerring testimony of the scriptures. I have brought forward the text, word for word, without comment, and I have referred you to the

passages. This declaration I make, because, the vice of lying being too frequently made little account of, the severity of its condemnation, may perhaps excite astonishment in your minds, and not meet with implicit credit. No: my brethren, there is no exaggeration. The vice of lying, however much we may gloss it over in our own minds, is not less heinous in the sight of God, than as it is here described.

Indeed, when we consider what are the ideas of men concerning this vice, we find that, even in the eyes of the professed worldling, it appears in the most odious and disgusting light, and is ranked by him in the list of the worst of crimes. What opinion is entertained of the man, who apostatizes from his creed, or who, in defiance of conscience, denies his God? What opinion is entertained of the man, who robs his neighbour of his honour, his possessions, or his life, by perjury? What opinion is entertained of the man, who is addicted to lies of calumny and slander, and who, in order to gratify his pride, his envy, his hatred, or his covetousness, makes no difficulty in propagating what he knows to be falsehood, in order to gain his ends? Of such people as these, we have the worst opinion. We consider them as dangerous characters, and take care to have as little connection with them as possible.

What opinion, again, do we entertain of the person, whom we know to be a professed liar, although, perhaps, he may not be instigated by

any rancorous malice ; or of him, who transgresseth against the truth so frequently, that we know not when to believe him ; or of him, whom we have caught sheltering himself under a lie ? I do not ask what opinion we entertain of ourselves, when we have transgressed in this respect : but what opinion do we entertain of others, when they have transgressed ? Oh ! then it is that we see the malignity of the offence. And if it is, that we ourselves have been duped, then our indignation is encreased almost beyond bounds.

In fact, the character is every where hated : and the imputation of being a liar, is considered as a stain of the deepest hue, by every one, who has any regard for honesty, and moral excellence. No greater insult can we offer to a man, were he even a Deist, or Atheist, than to give him the lie ; and no greater reproach can a man lie under, than to be reputed a liar. I will not say, that he cannot be guilty of a greater sin ; but, such is the idea that the world entertains of this vice, that few characters are considered more despicable.

Thus, my brethren, even by the followers of worldly pleasures, by those, whose principles of morality and piety, and even of religion, are nearly extinguished, the vice of lying is reprobated in the severest terms. We may go farther, and say, that it is reprobated even by those, who are ready to palliate and excuse every other vice, murder and theft alone ex-

cepted. It is a vice, that meets with universal reprobation from all ranks and conditions, from rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Christian and heathen. Now what does this prove? It plainly indicates, that there is a spark within us, emanating from the essence of divine truth, which none of the corruptions and abominations of depraved nature can utterly extinguish.

Thus, my brethren, we see, that the vice of lying is odious in the sight both of God and man. It is an abomination in the sight of God, and declared by him to be deserving of the severest punishment. It is execrated by man, and reckoned amongst the foulest blots that can stain his character. What more can be said, to impress on your mind an idea of the deformity of this most detested, most disgraceful vice? Make your reflections on it, and let them sink deep into your minds.

Oh, my brethren, when we have described the enormity of this vice of lying, what a horror must it strike into our very souls, when we look round, and witness the frequency of this crime! what alarm, when we behold the influence of corrupt nature, even in children, and hear them prevaricating and lying on the most trifling occasions! O ye parents! tremble for your children: ye guardians of youth! tremble for the objects of your charge, whenever you catch them in a lie. Remember, that the weakness of their infantile understanding is to be strengthened by the maturity of your judgment: and that, if you do not

counteract this influence of corrupt nature, by instruction and correction, the criminality of their habit of lying will be laid at your door. Never excuse a lie, even in a child. Be ready to pardon a fault, when committed through inattention or gaiety, provided the child acknowledge the truth : but never excuse a lie. Other faults may be committed by children, without their being conscious of their criminality. But lies are so essentially contrary to the law of nature implanted in their breasts, that, as soon as they are capable of deceit, they are conscious that they are acting wrong, when they tell a lie. Never, therefore, excuse a lie in a child. It will not be excused by the God of truth ; and if you excuse it, or pass it over as a fault of little weight, the consequences will be all attributed to you.

What, however, shall we say of ourselves, when we look back into our past lives, and reckon up the number of times that we have been guilty of this vice ? Oh ! the lies of malice, the lies of passion, the lies of excuse, which we have committed, during the many years that we have lived ; who shall reckon up the number ? And are they all registered in the books of unerring *truth* ? Yes, they are registered ; and they are registered in characters black, in proportion to their malignity. And are we, then, to be ranked with *dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and idolaters* ? Are we to be for ever excluded from the gates of

the heavenly city? It is to be hoped not. There is time given us for repentance and amendment. Notwithstanding the enormity of this vice, our Lord is ready to receive the repentant sinner, at whatever hour he shall return to him.

You, therefore, who are conscious of having frequently transgressed in this point, (and who is there amongst us, that can say he is not of the number?) enter seriously into yourselves, and endeavour to atone for the past, by sincere repentance. *Put away lying* for the time to come, as the Apostle admonishes, in the words of my text, *and speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour*. Remember, that nothing can excuse a lie, and that no power on earth, no nor in heaven itself, can allow you to tell a wilful lie, were it even to save the whole world. No : my brethren, even the Almighty himself cannot authorise a lie : for, truth being essentially his attribute, he cannot authorise that which is essentially contrary to it. Put ye away, therefore, all lies and deceit, and walk in the uprightness of your mind, and in the holiness of your calling.

You, particularly, my young friends, you, whose souls are yet uncontaminated with the grosser vices of perjury, adultery, or theft, let me exhort you to preserve your lips undefiled, and never to offend against the God of truth. Be sincere and candid in all your words. Always speak according to the dictates of your

conscience. If you are accused of disobedience, or of having committed a fault of any other kind, own to the truth at all times. Always recollect, that there is a God above, who knoweth your innocence or your guilt, and who heareth your words. Although you may entertain a hope that, by telling a lie, you may deceive your parents or superiors, and thereby escape correction, reflect, that you are exposing yourselves to a greater evil by the lie, than if you were to tell the truth : for you would offend God, who seeth all things, and would draw down the severity of his judgments on you. Whereas, were you to tell the truth plainly and sincerely, and your superiors had reasons to believe, that your fault was committed through thoughtlessness or levity, and not through depravity of morals, your acknowledgment would gain you the pardon, and what is more, the affection of your friends, and would bring down a blessing from heaven on you.—At all times, be more afraid of God than you are of your parents. Be more in dread of offending him, than of offending them. Be more terrified at the idea of the torments, which he will inflict on you if you tell lies, than of the correction which you may receive from them. Let these sentiments influence your minds, and you will never seek to justify yourselves by a lie.—Tell the truth, therefore, at all times ; and if it should be, that, by acknowledging to your fault, you did not escape the

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correction, which it was judged proper to inflict upon you, be assured that, by your sincerity, and by your detestation of a lie, you will obtain a blessing from God, and will make yourselves pleasing and acceptable in his sight. Children, pay attention to these few observations, and they will be of service to you.

And you, my brethren, who have arrived at the maturity of understanding and reflection, never degrade yourselves by doing that, which you would despise and reprobate in a child. Never tell a wilful lie, for the purpose of deceiving or cheating. Honour the truth, and follow the truth. Have God always before your eyes, and never transgress against his divine attribute of truth, for the sake of any emolument or advantage whatsoever.—By this strict adherence to truth, you will avoid the severe judgments, which will hereafter be pronounced against the disciples of the father of lies, and you will be preparing yourselves for an union with them, who have always loved the truth, and who are now enjoying themselves in the bosom of Him, who is the God of truth, in the regions of eternal happiness.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE VICE OF DRUNKENNESS.

*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury ; but be filled with the Holy Spirit.....*EPH. v. 18.

IN the epistle of this Sunday, the apostle admonishes us to *redeem the time*, and to *walk circumspectly*: and the motive he holds out, is, because *the days are evil*—a motive truly deserving of most serious consideration, in these degenerate days. He admonishes us *to be wise*: and the way to become wise, he says, is *to understand the will of God*. Proceeding to point out this will of God, he says, in the first place: *be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury, but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit*. This vice of drunkenness is frequently reprobated in the Holy Scriptures. It is described as one of the vices, which exclude from the kingdom of heaven: *neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, &c. shall enter into the kingdom of heaven*. (1 Cor. vi.) Contrary,

therefore, as it is to the will of God, let each one endeavour to avoid it, as he values the salvation of his soul.

Drunkenness, indeed, is not a vice of universal extent. The number of real drunkards is but small, when compared with the rest of Christians : and temperance may be said to be more frequently witnessed than any other virtue. But although the subject of drunkenness be applicable only to a few, it is a subject which all may listen to with profit. It will exhibit before the intemperate, the hideousness and the enormity of the crime to which they are habituated : and it will encourage the temperate, to proceed in the same prudent path in which they are walking, and to avoid, with still greater care, the deep abyss, into which they see that others have fallen. Be attentive, therefore, to the few reflections which I shall make on this odious vice.

Of all vices there is none so degrading to the exalted dignity of man, as that of drunkenness. Man is formed by nature to be the lord of this nether world, with dominion over all things, animate and inanimate. He is endowed with powers capable of knowing and contemplating the attributes of his Creator—the sovereign Ruler of the universe. He is adopted into the number of his children—he is permitted to call him Father :—he is invited and pressed to love him :—he is the dearest object of his solicitude. He is not formed, like all other created things,

merely for a time on this terrestrial globe, and then to sink again into his original nothing : he has a soul ; that soul is immortal, and its future destiny is nothing less than to be associated with the celestial spirits, to be united to the Great Omnipotent, and to enjoy ineffable happiness in the ocean of the Divinity, for endless ages. Truly may we say, 'with the Psalmist : *Thou hast made him a little lesser than the Angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour : and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, moreover, the beasts also of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea.* (Ps. viii.)

This is the glorious dignity of our nature ; and have we not reason to pride ourselves on it ? Pride in such a cause as this is honourable, is meritorious : it is an act of piety, inasmuch as it is an inducement to preserve this dignity unstained by any thing that is unworthy of it, and to raise ourselves far above the level of the brute or inanimate creation. There are men, and we may say the majority of men, who pride themselves on account of excellencies of a far inferior nature—excellencies, which generally are no better than imaginary ; and this pride leads them to exalt themselves, not above the brute by observing the strict rules of morality, but above their fellow-creatures—above souls which are immortal, and perhaps endowed with gifts of a more eminent quality, than what they

stores for eternity, by perfect submission to the will of God, in opposition to the dictates of corrupt nature, is bereft of all its powers. His whole soul, in fact, is in a manner estranged from him. He is not master of any one of its powers or faculties. And what is the consequence? Man, with the powers of his soul under his command, is a being far superior to all that is in this world, but when that command is lost, he is reduced below the level even of the brute creation. He is not master of the faculty, which is common to the lowest of animated beings,—I mean *instinct*. He cannot provide for his own safety: he cannot distinguish danger from security: he cannot extricate himself out of the least difficulty. If an accident comes upon him, it falls with its whole weight, for he is incapable of observing that first, that most universal law of nature—the law of self-preservation. But what is more degrading than all, instead of being an object of complacency in the whole court of heaven, he becomes the scorn of his fellow-creatures, and an object of ridicule and mockery to all the devils in hell.—Oh! what a disgusting picture is this! It is not a misrepresentation. There is not a feature in it, but what is to be found in the likeness of a drunkard. Oh! from what an exalted state, and into what an abyss does this unhappy man precipitate himself! And yet, observe the depravity of corrupt nature. After losing his faculties, one by one, the

last that exercises an influence over him, is pride. Although humbled, in the opinion of every one but himself, below every thing that is mean and contemptible in nature, he dares to pride himself as long as any spark of sense remains in him, on imaginary excellencies ; he is full of boasting and self-praise ; and if any one, whether dearest friend, or bitterest foe, for both are then alike to him, contradict him, he is indignant, and, in spite of reason or remonstrance, is resolved to defend his cause by the most violent means.—Alas ! what is man in the state of intoxication ? Is he man : or is he brute ? He is neither the one nor the other. He is degraded far below both.

This being the case, it is a matter worthy of enquiry, to examine what particular motives there can be, to induce this exalted, this dignified lord of the creation, I mean man in the state of innocence, to hurry himself into this abyss of vileness and degradation. That he is not necessitated to it, every one will readily acknowledge. It must, consequently, be his own act and deed. Now what are the motives, which operate the most powerfully ?——In the first place, there are many, who feel within themselves a propensity to drink. This propensity they have neither courage nor will to resist. They gratify it, at first cautiously, afterwards with less reserve. The gratification, instead of diminishing, encreases the propensity. They are drawn on with still greater

violence. And although conscience may upbraid them, and may cause them to feel a kind of dislike of themselves, when they recover their senses, and the qualms of a disordered stomach render them incapable of attending, as usual, to their ordinary duties, yet, when all this is passed away, they run into the same, with less and less restraint, till, at length, they become habituated to the vice, and sink victims of their own depravity.

Others are drawn on by the love of company and conversation. These, without any natural propensity to drinking, feel a kind of vacancy within themselves, when business does not call for their attention. They have no source of enjoyment in their own minds. Being strangers to true piety, they are tied down to the earth, and in earthly things alone are their affections centered. They wish for enjoyment, and they know not where to find it, but in sensual gratifications. They have never found pleasure in reading and contemplating spiritual things, nor in secret communications with God: and consequently, they do not think of drawing enjoyment from those sources. As, therefore, the mind of man must have relaxing pleasures of one kind or another, these people seek after pleasure where they expect to find it: they run after company: company leads them to drinking; and drinking leads them to dissipation and excess.

Others run into excess, for the purpose of

deadening the stings of a guilty conscience, or of drowning solicitude and care. The world frowns upon them : adversity, like an armed man, overpowers them : their conscience, already stained with guilt, upbraids them : no ray of comfort, either from within or without, shines upon them : the prospect before their eyes is entirely black. They will not look up to heaven, from whence alone consolation is to come. They seem to think that mercy is for ever withdrawn from them. God appears to them only as the God of justice. The thought of eternity, towards which they are hastening, is more than they can endure : and not being able to hide themselves from the face of God, as our first parents endeavoured to do, they drown their senses in liquor, as being the only means of shutting their eyes to the terrors of his judgments.—This lasts only for a time. As soon as reason returns, their fears are redoubled ; their anguish, their remorse, their excruciating tortures of mind, are increased ten-fold. The same remedy is their only resource : they fly again to drinking. The same tortures of mind take place, with redoubled force, in their sober moments. Thus are they hurried on, till, at length, the final separation takes place, and they are engulfed in a miserable eternity. Oh ! of all the causes, that lead unhappy men into intemperance, there is none so senseless, so inexcusable as this. Reason says : “ Seek peace where it is to be found.”

But they apply to the devil for peace and comfort, who they know is bent on their destruction ; and whose only object is, to cause them to be damned together with him.

These are the chief inducements, that lead men into the degraded, the vile state of drunkenness. And when we come to consider them, are they not such as ought to make us blush for the folly of poor human nature ? This, however, is not all. Ask the drunkard, what pains of body attend the indulgence of this vice. Let him describe the sickness, the headaches, the variety of pains which follow. Let him describe the domestic broils that accompany it. Let him describe the privations, the distresses, the miseries that are endured by the wife and family, and friends, in consequence of it. Let him describe the loss of health, the loss of strength, the loss of money, the loss of reputation, the loss of every thing that is valuable, which is incurred by it. Let him describe all these things, and you will not hesitate to say, that the evils arising from poverty and adversity, that the evils attendant on sickness and pain, that the evils attendant on persecution and slander, and that the evils brought on by the greatest 'possible misfortunes or losses, provided they are not occasioned by the criminality of the parties themselves, are nothing, when compared with the evils brought on by drunkenness. In these, there is a fund of consolation to be enjoyed, from the consideration,

that such is the will of God : but in the evils arising from drunkenness, there is no consolation whatever.

Such are the wages of intemperance, even in this life. But let us go forward, and see what becomes of these unhappy beings, after the shadow of this world is taken away. There are no escorting angels, to waft them into the realms of bliss. Although they have been most wretched, most miserable, most severely scourged during the days of their mortality, there is no cheering voice to salute them with : " The winter is past : the storms are over : peace and happiness shall henceforward be your portion for ever," No : they have not suffered their vilified and degraded souls to soar above this wretched earth during life ; and they shall not soar above it after death. They deliberately chose to wallow in the detestable mire of sensuality : they voluntarily swallowed all its filth : and now the wretched scene is over : their lot for all eternity, shall be no other than the pool of fire and brimstone ; where, in the midst of excruciating burnings, they shall call in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongues. Oh ! my brethren, behold these immortal souls, these intended associates of angels, these once exalted beings, these former objects of complacency, even to the Deity himself, behold them chained down to their beds of torture with links of fire, objects of ridicule and scorn to their seducers, the devils, with not a friend to

pity them or comfort them, and with not a ray of hope to cheer the dismal gloom of their eternal abode. Behold them agonizing in the pangs of eternal despair, for ever separated from their God, and from all that is good. Listen to their groans : let the sound of their lamentations ring in your ears. Oh ! the dismal, the never-ending consequences of intemperance.

You, who are now walking in the paths, in which these unfortunate mortals walked, be aware of the danger that threatens you. This same state will be yours, unless you reform. A short time hence, and perhaps it will be too late. The same unavailing shrieks of torture and despair, which are now uttered by the drunkards in the abyss of eternal fire, will be uttered by you. You know not when the Lord will come. According to his own declaration, he will come like a thief in the night, when least expected. The very next time, perhaps, that you are thus bereft of reason, and unable to attend to your own safety, an accident may deprive you of life. This is no uncommon thing. It has happened to thousands, and it may happen to you. The mercies of God have, indeed, hitherto preserved you ; but a continuation of these mercies is not promised to the wilful sinner. No : my brethren, the mercies of God are dealt out to you by measure ; if that measure is filled up, and squandered uselessly away, it is not improba-

ble but that the very next time that you run into excess, you will be either delivered up to a reprobate sense, or the thread of your life will be suddenly cut, and your poor degraded soul, hurried away in the midst of her sins, and plunged into the bottomless abyss. Oh! my unfortunate brethren, begin to reflect on the dangers which surround you. Your all is at stake for eternity. Tempt not the mercies of God any more. Enter seriously into yourselves, and be resolved henceforward to live up to the dignity of your nature, by strict sobriety and temperance. Consider the value of your immortal souls: look up to the heavens: behold your intended associates; behold the crown of glory, which is prepared for you. Shake off this mire of earthly sensuality. Despise all transitory, perishable things, as unworthy of your affections. *Use the things of this world, as if you used them not.* (1 Cor. vii.) *Have your conversation in heaven.* (Phil. iii.) God is all-sufficient for you. He can and will make you abundant amends, for every self-denial that you endure for his sake. Love and serve him, and he will impart to you greater consolation, greater happiness, than is to be found in intemperance. Take courage, therefore, and consult the true interests of Christian self-love. Be determined. Apply earnestly to God by prayer. Avoid the houses, the companions, which have been occasions of sin to you. Instil into your minds the spirit of self-denial and penance. Endeav-

your to subdue your passions, by offering up some acts of mortification every day. Refuse yourselves lawful indulgences, that you may have strength and grace to deny yourselves, when you are tempted to unlawful gratifications. Have the terror of God's judgments always before your eyes. Begin immediately. Be resolved to avoid drinking to excess this day. Make the same resolution to-morrow morning. Continue the same during the course of the week : and repeat it again the week following. In order to strengthen your resolutions, imagine to yourselves, that perhaps the hour of death is at hand; and that before another day, your soul may be demanded of you.—Frequently reflect on the necessity of atoning for your past crimes, by works of repentance. — In a word, be grateful to the goodness of God, which has hitherto preserved you, even in the midst of your sins, when, like dumb idols, you had ears, and could not hear ; eyes, and could not see ; and tongues, and could not speak. Attribute these his mercies towards you to his infinite love : consider them as pledges of his future love, and of other mercies, that he has in store for you. Love him in return. Love him with your whole hearts : love him with your whole souls : love him with your whole strength. Do this, and you will soon hold in abhorrence the vice of intemperance, and every thing that is calculated to separate you from your sovereign and only good. You will then

see yourselves in a light totally different from what you now do. You will be convinced of the dignity of your nature, and will be resolved not to compromise it, for the sake of any gratification that is not eternal. You will soar above this perishable world, and all its vanities and lying fooleries. You will again become objects of complacency to the court of heaven, and to the Deity himself ; and you will be preparing yourselves for that ineffable union with him, for which he originally created you.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.... MATT. xiii. 35.

THE object which our Saviour had in view, when he delivered the parable of this Sunday to his disciples, was one of the principal objects which engaged his attention, during his abode amongst us—namely, to promote peace and good-will amongst men. He came from heaven, to reconcile lost man to his Father; and, as a principal means of effecting this, he recommended, in the strongest terms, the necessity of man's being reconciled to his offending brother: *if thy brother have any thing against thee, go first and be reconciled to him, and then come and offer thy gift: (Matt. v.) forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you: (Luke vi.) forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: (Matt. vi.) the merciful shall find mercy. (Matt. v.)*

But, in no part of the gospel is this duty so strictly enforced, as in the parable of this Sunday. Under the similitude of a master forgiving his servant a debt, which he was unable to discharge, he exhibits the mercy of God towards sinners, in imparting to them the remission of their sins : and under the similitude of a servant, who would not remit to a fellow-servant a small debt, which he was unable to discharge, he exhibits the deformity of the vice, of which that man is guilty, who applies to God for the remission of his sins, and will not forgive the injuries, which he receives from his fellow-men. The similitude is expressed in the strongest terms. The debt which we, as sinners, have contracted with the Almighty, is expressed as amounting to ten thousand talents, a sum, which is equivalent to, at least, two millions of our money. The debt, which any of our fellow-servants can contract with us, let their injuries and ill-will be what they may, is represented as amounting, in the comparison, to no more than a hundred pence, a sum, which, in our money, would amount to no more than a few pounds. This immense debt, which we, by sin, have contracted with the Almighty, he is ready to remit, but only on the condition, that we remit the comparatively trifling debt, that our neighbour has contracted with us. Or in other words, he is willing to forgive us our sins, provided that we forgive the injuries, that we have received from others : and that, if we

do not comply with this condition, he will exact from us the payment of the last farthing : *so shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you do not forgive every one his brother from your hearts.* I will follow the thread of the parable in this discourse, and by showing you the enormity of the offence committed against God by sin, and the comparatively trifling offence which we receive from our fellow-creatures, by injuries and affronts, the justice on the part of God in requiring that we should forgive our offending brethren, before he forgives us. Be attentive, for there are none who have not offended God by sin, and there are few who have not received injuries from some one or other of their fellow-creatures.

The enormity of the insult, which is offered to the majesty of the God of heaven, by the most trivial act of disobedience to his almighty will, is far above the power of man to calculate. He is the great, the incomprehensible Lord of all. His will is the supreme law, both in heaven and on earth. He alone has the right to command : and he has power to enforce the observance of his commandments. From the beginning of eternity, to the time that the angels were created, his *will* was never resisted. In heaven, where he resides in the full plenitude of majesty, there is no resistance to his omnipotent *will*. After the dissolution of this temporary world, his *will* shall be the universal law for all eternity : it shall be obeyed in heaven :

it shall be obeyed in hell: never, never any more shall resistance be made to it.

For a limited time, that is, from the time he created the angels, to the final dissolution of the world, it has pleased him to impart the power of *free-will* to creatures. By this gift, he transfers, as it were, a part of his prerogative to man, and consents that a power should exist independent, to a certain degree, of his almighty and adorable will. His motive, as far as it is possible for mortal man to dive into the motives of inscrutable wisdom, may be said to be, that he willed to exert the powers of his love, and of his justice. He willed to show forth the excess of his love, by opening the treasures of his mercies to a subordinate rank of beings; that they might, in the first place, enjoy the happiness of existence; and secondly, that by a voluntary submission of the free-will, which they possessed, to his holy will, they might acquire merit in his sight, and be entitled to an eternal union with him in the endless ocean of his beatitude. He willed, likewise, to show forth the infinity of his justice, by the judgments which he has in store for those, who dare to prefer the dictates of the free-will which is given to them, when they are in opposition to his adorable will:—who dare to prefer their own pleasures, and to gratify their own sensual gratifications, when they are forbidden by the laws, which he has been pleased to impose on them.

These, perhaps, may be said to be his motives. But what condescension do they prove on the part of God, and what a stigma of consummate folly do they affix on the character of the offending sinner. Honour and glory belong exclusively to the Almighty. He possesses within himself all that is honourable and glorious. But disobedience robs him of his right : it dispossesses him, as it were, of a part of his own dominion : it circumscribes the reign of his holy will ; and dares to dispute the authority of his infinite Majesty. Can any outrage, my brethren, be greater than this ? Ah ! truly may we say, that it is a subject of astonishment that this great and omnipotent God, does not hurl down the thunders of his vengeance on the head of the culprit, the very instant that he dares to act in opposition to his blessed will : and that he does not instantly reduce the contemptible being to his original nothing. Wonderful is the forbearance and long suffering of our injured God.

But how great is the folly of man to enter into hostilities against his Maker ! What can he expect to gain in the unequal contest ? Is he not flying in the face of all that is great and powerful ? Is he not resisting a will that is omnipotent, and which was never resisted from the beginning of eternity ? Is he not insulting that good and merciful Creator, who brought him into existence for the express purpose of heaping his favours on him, and crowning him

with a wreath of immortal glory? Is he not truly kicking against the goad? Is he not committing an act, which the highest angel in heaven would not dare to commit,—an act, which makes him an object of horror in the sight of God, odious before the whole court of heaven, and worthy of the most excruciating tortures for all eternity? Justly is the guilt of sin compared to the debt of ten thousand talents, which the poor sinner is unable to discharge.

Compared with this, what can be the amount of the debt which any of our fellow-creatures can contract with us? Our Lord states the amount to be no more than one hundred pence—a debt of trifling importance. In fact, when we consider our relative situations, the justness of the calculation immediately appears. Nature has given us no superiority over our fellow-creatures. The same faculties that are given to us, are given to them. They have immortal souls, and are created for happiness hereafter, as well as ourselves. No command is given to them to be obsequious to our will, or to pay us particular marks of respect. We are all brethren together: members of the same body: and co-heirs of the same inheritance. We are all sinners: we are all humble supplicants before the throne of mercy: and to us all are addressed the words of our Saviour: *he that exalteth himself shall be humbled: (Luke xviii.) the first shall be last, and the last first. (Mark x.)*

What debt, therefore, does our neighbour contract with us, when he refuses to honour us with any particular mark of affection or regard; or even, when he is actuated to treat us with incivility and contempt? Does not humility say, that he treats us as we deserve?

Sometimes, however, it happens, that certain individuals, who have not the fear of God before their eyes, proceed farther; and not only refuse to treat us with that respect and esteem, which we suppose that we are entitled to, but return evil for good, seek to take away our good name, and render us contemptible in the eyes of others. Sometimes, likewise, they seek to injure us in our persons and property, and are so disposed that, were it in their power, they would deprive us of every thing that is dear and valuable in life. When enemies of this kind rise up against us, we are certainly exposed to many disagreeable occurrences. But, even then, the debt which these malevolent people contract with us, is nothing, when compared with the debt which we have contracted with God by sin. In fact, we ought not to consider it as any debt at all: but rather as means which the Almighty is pleased to give us, of doing penance for our sins, and discharging part of our own debt with him.

For, by whose permission is it, that enemies persecute and calumniate us? By no other than by the permission of God himself. We

are at all times sheltered under the wings of his Providence. *He is our protector and our helper.* (Ps. xxvii.) Not a hair of our head can fall to the ground without his consent. When enemies rise up against us, it is by his permission. When they injure us, either in our good name or in our property, it is, because he allows them to do it, for our greater good. We all deserve chastisement from his hands, and he inflicts it at the time, and in the manner that is most agreeable to his wisdom. Sometimes he chastises us by pains of body, sometimes by anguish and uneasiness of mind, sometimes by the violent attacks of the devil, and sometimes by the malevolence of our fellow-creatures. At all times, the afflictions which we endure come from him, and are intended for our good. Have we then any real reason to complain, when enemies assail us? Is it not what we deserve? Oh! let us not look at the instrument which the Almighty makes use of for our chastisement: but let us look up to him, and acknowledge the justice of our punishment. That our enemies commit an act of injustice against us, we readily allow: but that is to their own cost, for they will be called to a strict account for it hereafter, and dreadful will be the judgments inflicted on them, if they do not repent in time. But as for us, their injustice is an act of mercy towards us on the part of God, who wills thereby, to provide us with opportunities of satisfying his justice, and preparing ourselves for the

possession of that eternal crown which he has purchased for us.

Thus, my brethren, you see the nature of the debts, which we have contracted with God, and those, which our neighbour contracts with us. The debt between us and God is immense: and, unless it is gratuitously discharged by his mercy, will be the cause of our being consigned to the prison, *where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth*. (Job x.) The debt between us and our neighbour is trifling, amounting to no more than one hundred pence.—Now, what can be of more importance to us, than the inducing the Almighty to grant us a free discharge? and what sacrifice can be too great to obtain it? It is for this, that we daily pray. It is for this, that we perform acts of mortification and penance. It is for this, that we solicit the prayers of the just made perfect. It is for this, in fine, that we offer up the adorable sacrifice of propitiation. All this, however, will not do, unless we grant a free discharge to our offending brother: *so shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless you forgive every one his brother, from your hearts*. We must forgive: we must forgive freely and sincerely: we must forgive from our hearts. It matters not what the malice of our enemies against us may be, nor what the injuries, which the Almighty has permitted him to do us. We must forgive, in the same manner as we pray the Almighty to forgive us. There is no right of privilege—no exemption. The declaration

is general: *so shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless you forgive every one his brother, from your hearts.*

I will not say, that a compliance with this command is agreeable to the feelings of corrupt nature, or even to nature itself, in the state of innocence. Being made after the image of God, there are seeds, as it were, of his attributes planted in the soul, which expand as the powers of the soul are matured. Of these, *justice* is one. When an injury, therefore, is unjustly inflicted, the soul naturally feels an ardent desire that the injury should be repaired, and that the aggressor should meet with his reward. But when we consider that we are transgressors ourselves against a higher power, and that the judgments, which we deserve, will not be suspended, unless we offer violence to our own feelings, and forgive, although forgiveness is not in justice due, then a motive of a supernatural kind is presented to us,—a motive, which, when the consequences are maturely weighed, ought to make a powerful and effective impression on the mind. For this, however, we must not be worldlings: we must possess something of the spirit of piety: and then, when we receive injuries, we shall remember the insults which we have offered to an omnipotent God, and in our offending brethren we shall still recognise fellow-creatures—children of the same parent—souls, which we hope will be united with us hereafter in eternal glory.

To worldlings, I acknowledge, the task would be difficult. But is any privilege granted to man, because he is a worldling? He ought to think, as well as the pious Christian. And were he to think seriously, he would find abundant motives to repress his pride, and to humble himself to obedience to the commands of God. In the midst of his rebellions and treasons, this great and injured God entertains a love for him: he holds him in his hand: he tenderly watches over him, and protects him from the assaults of his enemies. He will not listen to the solicitations of the devil, who is incessantly urging him to withdraw his mercies, and let justice and judgment have its course. He not only loves, and protects him, but in his incarnation he submitted himself to the greatest humiliations for his sake; he shed the last drop of his blood, in order to purchase his forgiveness. And even to the present time, he continues to offer up his body as broken, and his blood as shed for him on our altars, for the purpose of drawing him to himself, and reconciling him to his injured Father. Were the worldling seriously to reflect on these things, could he hesitate, even for a moment, to forgive his offending brother?

There are not wanting those, who will say, that, were we to forgive every injury that is offered to us, and show no kind of resentment, it would be an inducement to our enemies to insult over us, and injure us still more, seeing

that they could do it with impunity. But this is not agreeable to the spirit of the gospel ; nor is it warranted by experience. St. Peter said to our Lord : *Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? And Jesus answered: I say not to thee, till seven times, but till seventy times seven times.* (Matt. xviii.) Our duty, therefore, according to the gospel, is to forgive, as often as we receive an affront or injury : and the moment we refuse to do this, we render ourselves liable to be sentenced to the severity of the judgments, which are due to our own offences against God. As to laying ourselves open to fresh insults, and injuries, by christian forgiveness, it is not warranted by experience. Would St. Paul have said, *overcome evil with good*, if evil could not be subdued by good? He knew human nature too well. The world, with all its vices, is not a stranger to feeling. It is awed into respect by the virtues of the faithful Christian. So congenial to the nature of man are the duties prescribed by the gospel, that, when they are fulfilled to a tittle, they excite the astonishment and veneration of men, the most opposed to the spirit of piety. Its own followers, the world will calumniate, and injure, and persecute with the utmost rancour of malice. But the true man of God it looks up to with admiration and awe. Experience, therefore, proves that the dignity of man is not compro-

mised, even in the opinion of worldlings, by forgiving injuries, of what nature soever they may be.

It happens, however, sometimes, that persons, who have something of the spirit of piety, and who mean well, deceive themselves on the subject of forgiving injuries : they imagine that they forgive, at the time that they do not forgive. They say to themselves : " I wish my enemy no harm : I am willing to serve him, were it in my power, when I see him in need : " and, at the same time, feel sentiments of animosity and ill-nature, when the thought of him comes into the mind. This is not christian forgiveness, because it is not in this manner that we wish God to forgive us. Were we well assured, that the enemy, who had injured us, still persevered in his animosity, and watched every opportunity to continue his annoyance, it is not required that we should embrace such a man as a friend, or admit him to partake of our confidence or society, however intimate we may have previously been. But, we are to forgive ; and not in words only, but from our hearts : and if we had sufficient reason to believe, that that man was sincerely repentant of the part that he had taken against us, and of the injuries he had done us, we ought to admit him again to our society, and remember no more what is past. Such is the forgiveness that we pray for from God : and were we in the dispositions

above described, we should receive that pardon, which it is our duty to give to our most inveterate, but repentant enemies.

Take courage, therefore, my brethren, enter into the true sentiments of piety, and deceive yourselves no longer with half-reconciliations. It is fashionable to say, after having received a slight, or imaginary affront, "I dont see such a person; we dont speak." Such words are not christian, unless it is when the person is become an inveterate enemy, or a reprobate, whose society would be a subject of scandal. —Forgive, as you hope to be forgiven. Forgive, not in words only, but in deed, and in effect. Forgive truly, and sincerely, and entirely. Then, if you truly repent, you may look up with confidence, for the pardon of your offences against God, however enormous or multiplied they may be : and, notwithstanding the criminality of your past lives, you may reasonably hope that a crown is prepared for you.

ALL SAINTS.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands..... APOC. vii. 9.

THE Festival of All Saints ought to be considered by Christians as a day of spiritual gladness and consolation. It is not like other festivals, on which we are invited to return thanks to God, for the benefits which we have received, from the particular circumstances of the Incarnation and Death of our Redeemer, or for the benefits conferred on individual saints ; but it is a festival instituted for the purpose of stimulating us to exertion, by the examples of, and by the prospect of obtaining the same rewards, which have already been conferred on an innumerable multitude of our fellow-creatures, who once walked in the same humble paths as ourselves, who were exposed

to the same trials, experienced the same weaknesses, and who, by persevering to the end in the most strenuous exertions to sanctify their souls, have attained the summit of their wishes, in the possession of their God in eternal glory.

—It is a festival, which ought to induce us to fight with redoubled earnestness, in the cause in which we are engaged, knowing that we have the same helps as they had, and knowing that it is in our power, if we correspond with the grace which will be given to us, to attain to as great a state of perfection as they have done. Truly, my brethren, is it a day of festivity and exultation. In those blessed abodes the Apostle and Prophet beheld an immense *multitude, whom no man could number, out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues.* (Apoc. vii.) He beheld the whole assembly of the Elect of God, such as it will be seen after the final dissolution of this temporary world, and after the awful separation of the good from the bad, has taken place at the day of judgment. He saw the whole of that immense multitude, which was to supply the place of the fallen angels. He saw the whole of the heavenly choirs of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, of dominations and powers, and of the poor inhabitants of the earth, now become the *just made perfect*, who will for all eternity sound forth the praises of the Most High, and who will be for ever immersed in the ocean of his Divinity.—Oh!

what a multitude of happy spirits!—a multitude, composed of the faithful spirits of God, and gathered out of the four corners of the earth. In that happy number, perhaps, were seen many of our relations and friends : and who is there amongst us, who does not hope, that he likewise was united with them ?

Oh ! were we to be favoured with a sight of that happy company, were it only for one moment, how vain, how empty, would appear all the pomp and splendor of this world ! With what disgust should we turn away, during the whole of our lives, from the gayest scenes which mortal man could present before us ! Situated as we are in this land of exile, our ideas, our conceptions are all earthly ; and the reason is, because earthly things are alone presented to our view. The splendors of heaven are concealed from us : they are far above our comprehension : power is not given to us, to form the most distant idea of them : they are what the ear of man has not heard, nor the eye of man has seen, nor what is possible for the heart of man to conceive. (1 *Cor.* ii.) It is expedient for us, that it should be so. For, were it permitted to mortal man, to penetrate the veil which conceals the glories of heaven from our view, the existence of the human race in this world would soon be at an end. We should not be able to apply ourselves to any thing that was earthly. We should disregard and forget all worldly concerns. There would be no lon-

ger marrying, or desires of marrying, among the children of men; and we should all languish out our lives in sighs and tears, longing only for the happy moment, when we should be released from the body of this death, and be at liberty to fly with the wings of the dove to those blessed mansions of unspeakable joy and felicity. It is expedient for us, therefore, that a veil should be thrown over the glories of the next world, and conceal them from our view. Enough is manifested to us, to excite our desires, and to raise our expectations, without taking off our attention from those worldly duties, which Providence has been pleased to impose upon us for the good of society, and for the continuance of the human race. This the saints experienced. Enough was manifested to excite their longing expectations: and sufficient was concealed from their view, to enable them to fulfil their earthly duties. They were good subjects, good members of society, at the time that they sighed after the courts of the Lord. Now, that the bands of their mortality are dissolved, their longing hopes of fruition are completed, and the whole expanse of the heavenly Sion is thrown open before them, in all its beauty, and in all its splendor.—We, like the saints during the days of their mortality, see things now *as through a glass*, (1 Cor. xiii.); but, if we follow their example, the time will come, when we shall see things as they are, and enjoy our God face to face, The

great danger to which we are exposed, is, lest the influence of the world should make too deep an impression on our minds, and cause us to think too little of the happiness which awaits us hereafter. The examples of the saints are calculated to guard us against this danger. Let us make them, therefore, the subject of our meditation, and, like true heirs of the promise, let us be resolved, not to lose the substance for the sake of the shadow.

We are here labouring in the vale of tears. We cannot enjoy unmingled happiness in our present state, and we are exposed to the greatest danger of being deprived of happiness hereafter. We are encompassed with trials and temptations on every side. Our eyes, our ears, and all our other senses and faculties, are, by nature, sighing continually after earthly gratifications. Our whole being, consulting depraved nature alone, seems to be tied down to this present world, as to its parent, and seems to look to this world as the source of every comfort and delight; similar, in some respects, to the sensations which are felt by the creatures who know not God.—There is nothing to counteract this impression of the world on the corporeal senses, but the instructions which we receive from our parents in infancy, and from our Pastor in our more advanced years, the secret inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and the examples of the saints.—This is our state. We all feel it. There is not one

amongst us, who does not experience the influence of the world, enticing him to take part with it, and to seek his consolation here. There is not one, who does not experience, that the secret inspirations of heaven, and the exhortations of the ministers of God, even in his maturer years, are too weak to enable him to resist the temptations to which he is subject, without offering the greatest violence to his inclinations, and without continual watchfulness, and frequent acts of self-denial and penance. There is not one, who does not experience, that he is sometimes, inadvertently at least, led astray from the paths of strict virtue, notwithstanding all his desires, and all his endeavours.

In this state of continual danger and continual conflict, the Church exhorts us to look up to heaven, and to behold in spirit that immense multitude of saints, who have been exposed to the same trials and temptations, to which we are now exposed. They overcame them all, and are now happily arrived in port. The Church encourages us to imitate their example. Whatever our state of life may be : however great may be our temptations, our troubles, our afflictions, our losses, or our sufferings, there are saints in heaven who have endured greater, and have endured them in such a manner, as to make them contribute to their eternal happiness. Enter, therefore, into the sentiments of your holy Mother the Church.

Frequently place before your eyes the examples of the saints. Encourage yourselves to walk in their footsteps. They were not a different race of men from what you are. They had exactly the same nature as you have, the same human weaknesses, the same inclinations to indulge in pleasure as you have. Say therefore to yourselves, from time to time : "Is it not in my power to do what so many, in the same circumstances in which I am, have done before me? They overcame every obstacle : they triumphed over all their enemies ; or rather, not they, but the grace of God, which was in them. I am assured, that the same Almighty Protector is as ready to come to my assistance, as he was to theirs. In fact, he has declared, that he willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he will receive every one, however heavy laden he may be, who sincerely returneth to him. (*Ezek. xxxiii.*) If, therefore, I profit by the grace of God, as they did ; if I resolve to renounce the ways of the prodigal son, and return without delay to my father's house, what is there to prevent me from meeting with a favourable reception ! And, if I put to profit the grace of God, as they did, and persevere to the end, what is there that can cause me to be separated from him in the land of the living ?"

Ah! my brethren, were you frequently to reason with yourselves in this manner, and not only reason with yourselves, but be resolved to follow the dictates of reason, what beneficial

effects would be produced! In all other things, you are far from undervaluing your abilities or your prudence. When you compare yourselves with others of your acquaintance as to this or that acquirement, or natural endowment, you seldom give the preference to them. You seem to feel a confidence in yourselves that you can do as much, and in as excellent a manner, as what others can do. You undervalue not your powers. On the contrary, so great is your pride, that in every subject of competition, you always give the preference to your own judgment and discretion, and vainly imagine that all others should do the same. This is according to the spirit of the world. Why not do the same in spiritual things? Why not pride yourselves upon the endowments of grace? Why not do as much for God and his holy love, as you would do for vanity and self-love? Why not make salvation your principal, your only concern, and do as much to secure that, as you would to secure some valuable object that was merely temporary? Why not try to do as much as others have done?—The world, undoubtedly, presents obstacles. But to whom of the saints were not obstacles presented? And who is there among the saints, who overcame those obstacles without the assistance of the grace of God? According to nature, we are the same as they were. And, according to grace, we have the same God to help us as they had. Of these the multitudes are so great that, as the

prophet expresses it, no man can number them : and shall we humble ourselves so low, as to acknowledge that we cannot do as much as was done by the least of them? No : let us indulge a pious pride in this respect, and resolve not to be outdone by them, in things which are of such importance to our welfare.

When, however, I speak of emulating the works of the saints, I do not mean the wonderful austerities which the canonized saints practised, nor the stupendous miracles which they wrought. But I speak of those virtues, which made them saints, I speak of those virtues, which are recommended by our Lord himself as leading to perfection, and which the Church has appointed to be read in the gospel of this festival, on purpose to remind us, that they are the only means of attaining to true sanctity. By *poverty of spirit*, they withdrew their affections from the things of this world, and fixed them on the good things of eternity.—By *meekness and humility*, they learnt to endure with patience, and for the love of God, the crosses and tribulations of this life.—By the spirit of *mourning*, they were led in the ways of repentance, lamenting over their past sins, and the sins of others.—By *hungering and thirsting after justice*, they were animated in their exertions to sanctify their souls more and more, to promote the honour and glory of God by every means in their power; and, by word and example, to draw others into the same holy obedi-

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ence to the divine commands.—By the spirit of *mercy*, they learnt to compassionate the failings of others, to forgive injuries, and to relieve the distressed.—By the *spirit of peace and good-will*, they laboured to promote harmony and concord, where the spirit of dissension reigned, and to maintain an inviolable peace between their own souls and God.—By *cleanness of heart*, they reduced the flesh into subjection to the spirit, and effectually crucified it with its vices and concupiscences. By the spirit of *fortitude*, they were emboldened to suffer with joy, for the name of Jesus, all temporal calamities,—were ready to sacrifice their lives, rather than forsake the service of God, or consent to one mortal sin.

These are the virtues of which I speak, and there is nothing in any one of them that is above your powers. Were your weakness even greater than that of the generality of men, there is nothing in any of them but you may perform with ease, by the assistance of the grace of God.—Now, it is in the practice of these virtues that sanctity consists. The extraordinary austerities, and miracles, which we read of in the lives of saints, are not essential to sanctity. A Christian may be holy, and very acceptable in the sight of God, without performing any of them.

But, although I have enumerated these virtues, as being in the power of every one to practise, I readily acknowledge that much vio-

lence must be offered to corrupt nature, before we can become perfect in them. Difficulties we must all expect to meet with in this land of exile. There is no coming to the land of promise, without enduring the dryness and fatigues of the desert. There is no crossing the ocean, without being exposed to the dangers of storms and tempests.—But, when we behold an immense multitude of fellow-creatures, out of all nations, and peoples, and tribes, and tongues, who have overcome the same, and perhaps greater difficulties, than any that we shall have to encounter:—and when we know, that, provided we are patient and persevere, we shall obtain the victory over them, in the same manner as they did, who is there amongst us so devoid of courage, as to be disheartened, and shrink from the conflict? Is not the crown worth contending for? And will not the crown be more brilliant in proportion to the difficulties which we have to surmount? Why then should we fear? The trials of the saints are now at an end. They were painful to flesh and blood, during the time that they continued, in the same manner as ours may be at the present time. But with them they are all over. Their winter is past and gone: and they are enjoying the happy fruits of their patience and long-suffering; and their joy no man shall take from them. It will be the same with us a while hence. Although the time of trial may be painful, it will not last long. Although the struggle

may be violent, in order to subdue certain passions or vices, to which we have been habituated, it will only be for a time: the enemy will be obliged to yield to our persevering efforts, and take to flight. Although the affliction may be severe, or the pain acute, to which we are subjected, it will not last long: joy will quickly succeed to sorrow.—Let us not, therefore, be disheartened. Let us endure all things patiently, and fight the battles of the Lord manfully: and, perhaps, a short time hence, we shall be rejoicing with the saints, and blessing the mercies of God, who imposed them on us, and thereby provided us with means of laying up treasures for eternity.

Look up to heaven, therefore, my brethren. Look up to those happy mansions, where joys are prepared for you, which *neither the eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man can conceive.* (1 Cor. ii.) Encourage yourselves by the examples of the saints, and celebrate this festival, not merely by giving thanks to God for their glory, and desiring their prayers, but by endeavouring to imitate their virtues, in order to partake of their rewards. Do not look to the world for consolation and hope: you will not find any there. Your time of sojourning in this land of exile will soon be closed. Prepare yourselves for the land of promise. Look forward, and sigh after immortality. The saints are waiting for you, ready to welcome your arrival. Banish from your minds all inordinate

affection for these vain and perishable things, and fix your hearts on the joys above.

Since this time last year, many souls have entered the mansions of bliss. Many more will enter before this time next year: and, were you all to enter seriously the ways of virtue, some of you, perhaps, may be of the number. Oh! what happy tidings would it be, were it announced to you, that you were to enter into the house of the Lord! Prepare yourselves, therefore, without delay. Say not: "To-morrow, to-morrow, I will begin to-morrow." Begin this very day. You will never find less impediments, or fewer obstacles. Perhaps *the night is coming on, in which no man can work.* (John ix.) Begin, therefore, without delay, that, *at whatever hour the Lord shall come, he may find you watching.* (Mark xiii.) You will thus secure to yourselves admittance into the kingdom of heaven, whenever it shall please God to terminate your mortal existence.

ALL SOULS.

ON PURGATORY.

They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment..... JOHN V. 29.

ON this day, my brethren, when our attention is called to the recollection of all our departed relatives, friends, and fellow-creatures, the Church has appointed to be read, in the Gospel of the Mass, the important sentence contained in my text, which at once reminds us of the future state of punishment and reward in the next world, and the means by which we are to escape the one, and obtain the other. *They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.* The same important truths are delivered by St. Paul in his 2d. Epistle to the Romans: *God will render to every man according to his works: to them, indeed, who, according to pati-*

ence in good works, seek glory, and honour, and incorruption, eternal life : but to them that are contentious, and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath, and indignation.

After the few years of our sojournment in this world are terminated, we shall be summoned before the awful tribunal of our God ; an examination, minute and severe, of all our thoughts, words, works, and omissions, will take place, and a happy or miserable eternity will depend upon the result.—Our friends, who are gone before us, have endured the severity of this trial, and sentence deciding their eternity, is already pronounced upon them. They who died in the state of mortal sin, are condemned to eternal torments, and are, at this moment, and will be for endless ages, uttering unavailing lamentations, and shrieks of woeful despair. They, on the other hand, who have not been found in that unhappy state, are either already immersed in the ocean of the Divinity, or enjoy the pleasing certainty, that that happiness will not be long deferred.

It not being in the power of mortal man to see behind the veil, which conceals the state of his departed friends, charity will not allow us to determine that any one of them, individually taken, however criminal his life may have been, is absolutely condemned. And the reason is, because man is not the searcher of hearts, and it is not in his power to ascertain, whether the last moments of a wicked man were not, like

those of the thief on the cross, moments of sincere and accepted repentance. Nor will the knowledge, which has been revealed to us, of the infinite sanctity of God, and of the unworthiness of man, even in a comparative state of perfection, allow us to decide positively, unless supernatural tokens demonstrate it, that any one individual is admitted into the mansions of bliss. All that we can say, in respect to each and every one of our departed friends, is, that *his works have followed him*, and that he is *rewarded according to his works*. They have all completed their *spiritual edifice*, as St. Paul terms it, (1 Cor. iii.) and it is unknown to us whether the materials of their building, were no other than *gold, silver, and precious stones*, or whether there was not an intermixture of *wood, hay, and stubble*. But this we know, *that every man's work shall be manifest hereafter; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

In this state of uncertainty, however, we hope for the best: we hope that our departed friends have been admitted into the mansions of bliss; although, at the same time, we fear, lest they should have mingled *hay, wood, and stubble*, in their building, and should be con-

demned to *suffer loss by fire*, before they are put in possession of their eternal crown. The words above quoted from St. Paul, apply not to the souls condemned to hell, for, as the scripture says, (*Matt. xxv. 41.*) the torments of hell are eternal. They are applicable only to those whose works were not perfect,—who contracted defilements, but which defilements did not separate them from the grace of God,—who, like the just man, recorded in the scripture, (*Prov. xxvii.*) fell seven times, and yet did not fall from the state of justice. These are the souls *that shall suffer loss, yet so as by fire, and nevertheless, ultimately be saved.* Now, knowing the frailty of human nature, we have reason to fear for every one of our departed friends, and to act as if it were more than probable, that many defilements of this kind were attached to them at the time of their departure out of the world. For this reason, we deem it an act of charity and love, to pray for them, thinking that, as Judas Macchabeus expresses it, *it is a holy and wholesome cogitation, to pray for the dead, that they may be released from their sins.* (2 Mac. xii. 43.)

The doctrine of Purgatory, or that souls defiled with smaller sins shall suffer for a time, in the next world, before they enter heaven, is a doctrine, which the followers of what is mis-called the reformation, refuse to admit. They found their opinion upon the vague sentence of the Wise Man, *wherc the tree falls, there it shall*

lie, (Eccl. xi. 3.) and upon the negative argument, that the word *Purgatory* is not to be found in scripture. Upon these weak grounds, they dare to deny a doctrine, which is founded on reason and scripture, and which is supported and upheld by the concurrent testimony of all ages and nations. The subject, indeed, is not clearly and unequivocally expressed in the inspired writings, but the deductions to be drawn from what is there clearly expressed, are too plain to be misunderstood, by a Christian of an unbiassed mind. The scriptures declare, that nothing defiled shall ever be admitted to the embraces of the God of sanctity. (*Apocal.* xxi.) Now, if there be no place of purgation in another world, the soul that is defiled with only *one* single idle *word*, (*Matt.* xii.) shall be consigned to the place of never-ending woe, equally with the drunkard, murderer, and idolater. And who can subscribe to this doctrine? Every authority declares, that God is a God of justice, as well as of mercy. Now this would not be true, if there were no place of purgation from venial offences, in another world. For, if a soul be condemned to eternal torments for a trivial imperfection, an *idle word*,—a fault which does not extinguish the perfect love of God in his breast, a punishment would be awarded, far exceeding his deserts, and as such, would be an act of injustice on the part of God! —However, in order to avoid the crime of fixing such a blasphemous imputation on the attri-

bute of the *justice* of God, these separatists from the Catholic Church pretend, without any warrant from the word of God, that all the defilements, which are not deserving of eternal torments, are remitted at the moment of dissolution. Vain delusion ! Were these men seriously to weigh the import of the words of scripture, and form their religious creed therefrom, instead of receiving their opinions from the nursery, or from the prejudices of education, and wresting the scriptures in order to bring them into accordance with them, how soon would they discover, that *every idle word, that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it at the day of judgment* ; consequently, that the account will be exacted, after the summons to judgment shall have been issued :—that *every man shall receive his reward according to his own labour* ; (1 Cor. iii. 8.) and that God *will render to every man according to his works* : (Matt. xii. 36.) consequently, that there is no remission of debt, however small it may be, until they have paid the last farthing. Many other texts may be adduced to prove, that there is no remission of sin, at the moment of dissolution, unless there be a due concurrence on the part of the sinner. —The truth, therefore, is, that if there be not a place of purgation from lesser sins, or a place of suffering for a time, every soul defiled with sin, be it only the sin of an *idle word*, must be eternally excluded from the beatific vision of God. There is no mincing the matter

in a question of this kind. *Nothing defiled can enter heaven* : (Apoc. xxi.) and if there is no place of purgation for lesser offences, the soul that is guilty, at its separation from the body, of the least defilement, must be necessarily condemned to the fire of eternal darkness. And what a scene is this, to be held out before Christians of the present day!

It is said, however, that the scriptures nowhere speak of such a place as Purgatory. The name *Purgatory*, I allow, is not, but that such a place did exist, is clearly expressed : and if it once existed, where is proof to be found, that it has ceased to exist? According to St. Peter, there were men, in the days of Noah, who sinned by not giving credit to the report, that the universal deluge was at hand, but which sin was not unto death, for their punishment was not to be eternal : *Christ, says St. Peter, being enlivened in the spirit, in which also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison : which had been sometimes incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God, in the days of Noe, when the ark was a-building.* (1 Pet. iii.) Other texts might be brought forward to prove, that the faithful of the Old, as well as of the New Law, were convinced of the existence of a place of purgation from lesser offences : such as the testimony of Macchabeus, who says that it is a holy and wholesome cogitation to pray for the dead, that they may be released from their sins : (2 Mac. xii.) and

likewise the above quoted declaration of St. Paul, speaking of souls, who have completed their spiritual edifice, or, in other words, *completed their course*, that some *shall be saved, yet so as by fire*. (1 Cor. iii.)

However, I will not enlarge farther on the controversial part of the subject. I am speaking to members of the ancient Universal Church of Christ:—men, who believe that *God will render to every man*, in the next world, *according to his works*, (Rom. ii.) that, after the Lord shall have come, they, *who knew the will of the Lord, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*; and that they, *who knew it not, shall be beaten with few stripes*. (Luke xii.) To you, therefore, I address myself, and exhort you to be earnest, and persevering in your supplications to the throne of mercy in favour of all the souls, who are confined for a time in the receptacles of sorrow.

There is not one amongst you, who has not lost some near relative, or dear friend, for whose eternal welfare he is not particularly anxious. And even were there no ties of love and gratitude, the bonds of charity unite you to all the faithful departed. In Christ we are all brethren, and members of the same body. For the welfare of all, therefore, we ought to feel a solicitude, and to pray in general terms for all. Remember your friends and relations in particular: but in general pray for all. You may not be unmindful even of those who were never

united to the Catholic Church on earth. For, although the Church allows not public prayers to be offered for any but her own acknowledged members, she does not forbid her children to pray in private for others, annexing this condition, *provided they are capable of being benefited by their prayers*. For, as God alone is the sovereign Judge, and it is He alone who knows where invincible ignorance exists, it is not for us to declare, that sentence of condemnation has been passed on any individual, merely on account of his want of faith.

What the sufferings are, which souls endure in this place of purgation, have not been positively revealed to us. They may, perhaps, be of the same nature as those which are endured by the devil and his angels. At least the same idea is given of them. Of the damned it is said, *go you cursed into everlasting fire*: and of the souls in a state of purgation it is said, *they shall be saved, yet so as by fire*. Fire is declared to be the punishment of both: but to what degree of violence, it is not for us to ascertain. This we know, that, whatever may be the nature of their punishment, it will be proportioned to their offences. And this proportion we are to reckon, not from the judgments which God inflicts on sinners in this world, but from the judgments which his infinite justice demands, and which may be calculated, in some degree, from the sufferings and death, which his beloved Son endured for the sins of men. Consi-

dering, therefore, the passion and death of our Redeemer, may we not say that, having treated his beloved Son so severely, in whom there was no sin, he will treat those souls, which are defiled with sin, even venial sin, in a more severe manner, and will inflict more agonizing sufferings upon them, than our blessed Saviour endured in the most excruciating stage of his passion? In a word, it is said, *they shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

But, my brethren, although they suffer, yet they are not devoid of consolations. In the midst of their excruciating torments, they are favoured with interior joys, far surpassing any that can be enjoyed in this life. They are the beloved friends and children of God: and we may reasonably suppose, that God, who always chastizes with regret, infuses into their souls delights, which considerably alleviate their pains. This he did for the martyrs, when agonizing upon racks and gridirons, and in the midst of flames. And may it not be supposed, that he does the same for those, who have finished their course, and who are suffering only for a time, in order to atone for trivial offences?

Again, may we not say, that the pains of these detained souls, are considerably mitigated by their interior feelings? They embrace their sufferings as their just due. They feel proper sentiments of gratitude for the mercies of their Redeemer, who, by his blood, has liberated them from eternal torments; and they

willingly, and cheerfully submit to these temporary punishments, considering that they are treated with more mercy than their sins deserve.

We may reasonably, therefore, suppose, that they are perfectly submissive to the will of God, and that, although their souls are longing for the courts of the Lord, they wait, without impatience, the accomplishment of his justice.

These consolations, however, are little, when compared with others which they enjoy. They are conscious that the storms and dangers of this world are over. They know that they are freed for ever from the snares of their mortal enemy—the devil, and that they have escaped out of his hands. They know that they can never more offend their God, and that an eternity of happiness will be their portion. They know that they are of the number of the elect, and that, ere long, they will be admitted into the society of the Angels, and Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles, and of all the just made perfect, and that they will be immersed in the ocean of the Divinity, for endless ages. All this is to them a certainty.—Oh! my brethren, who can conceive the transports of delight, which overwhelm their souls, even in the midst of their tortures, when they look towards this enchanting prospect! A *certainty* of salvation! A *certainty* of being happy for eternity! A *certainty* of being for ever united to their God! A *certainty*, yes, my brethren, reflect on the word, a *certainty* that their souls

are secure, and their ALL is safe for endless ages.

In addition to this, who can form an idea of the love, which they feel for their God. They are divested of the flesh. To them the world has ceased, with all its allurements. They have been before the tribunal of their Judge, and they have seen their God face to face. They have beheld him looking upon them with looks of complacency and love. They have heard his words—words of love. They have beheld his bosom opened before them; and they have heard him declare, that therein should be their abode for all eternity. They are convinced of the excess of his love for them; and they feel within themselves a love for him, which it is impossible for mortal man to conceive.—Oh! my brethren, if the love of God has wrought such wonders in men, even during their abode in the flesh, what must be its effects in souls, which have seen their God, and are certain of enjoying him for ever! If the pious St. Augustine exclaimed: “My love is my weight,” how truly is love the weight of these suffering souls, and how ardently do they tend towards the possession of that love, which they behold so near unto them!

But, my brethren, this is a subject which we cannot fully comprehend, as long as we are in this world. This, however, we may say, that the love of God is the greatest consolation of these imprisoned souls, and, at the same time,

is their greatest torment. It is their greatest consolation, because they know that it will be their eternal inheritance:—and their greatest torment, because they are continually tending towards the possession of it, and are kept back by the defilements, which they have contracted. Oh! how hateful, how disgusting do all these now appear in their eyes! How do they wish to be freed from them! How sincerely do they acknowledge the justice of their sentence.

In the midst of these consolations, and these ardent longings to be united to their sovereign Good, how aptly are the words of Job put into their mouth by the Church: *Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of God hath touched me.* (Job xix.) With what earnestness, may we not suppose, that they turn towards their former relatives and friends; and, were they allowed to appear before them, what solicitations would they not make for their assistance! They know that their own sufferings will no longer be united to, and sanctified by the merits of Christ. But they know that the prayers and good works of their friends on earth, will be sanctified by those merits, and may be made applicable to them. With what earnestness, therefore, may it be supposed that they turn towards you! And can you be insensible to their entreaties? —Oh! my brethren, never forget your departed friends. Pray for them every day. Give alms-deeds in their name. Do good works for

them. Do for them, as you will wish others should do for you hereafter. In a short time, perhaps, you may be in the place, in which they now are. And if that should be the case, how will you wish for the prayers of your surviving friends! Help them, therefore, by every means in your power. They will not be unmindful of your good offices. The time will come, when they shall be freed from confinement, and united to their sovereign Good. Then they will remember you. They will be supplicants for you before the throne of mercy: and will obtain for you favours and mercies, which will contribute to bring you more speedily to the possession of the same eternal joys, which your prayers enabled them more speedily to possess.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTEC.

ON HUMAN RESPECT.

Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of man. . . . MATT. xxii. 16.

IN these high terms of commendation, my brethren, did the disciples of the Pharisees, the avowed enemies of our Lord, speak of him, who came to be our *way*, our *truth*, and our *life*. It was not without reason. During the whole course of his earthly pilgrimage, he shewed no *respect of persons*. He inveighed with as much vehemence against the vices of the rich, as against the vices of the poor:—against the vices of the Priests and Levites, as against the vices of the laity. His only object was, *to go about doing good*. One soul was as valuable to him as another. The only recommendation, that caused him to favour some more than others, was that of being *little and humble* in their own eyes, and *trembling* with awe and fear *at his words*.

In this example of our Saviour, a lesson of considerable importance is presented before us. *Human respect* is a vice, which, in a greater or less degree, possesses an influence over the mind, and is manifested in the conduct of almost every Christian. It does not always amount to what is criminal in the sight of God: and when that is the case, there is no cause for reproof. But it too generally amounts to guilt, and leads to guilt of the most serious consequences. This is the *human respect*, to which I wish to call your attention.—Some it causes to show a marked distinction to the rich, and to behave with a kind of disdain towards the poor, in those places, where all, both poor and rich, noble and contemptible, are equally suppliants before the throne of mercy, and where worldly considerations ought to be totally disregarded.—Others, and even many of those who are the guardians of public morals, it causes to pass over unnoticed the vices of the great, or of intimate friends, at the time that they are ready to reprove, without mercy, the poor and despised, for crimes of far less magnitude.—Others, again, it causes to neglect occasionally many of the duties which they owe to God: sometimes, because friends call upon them, and they dare not say, that the service of God calls them away: at other times, because they are in the company of those, who know not the tenets of our religion, and they are afraid, lest sarcasms and scoffs may be cast

upon the observances to which the laws of the Church oblige them.—All these are severely condemned, by the example of our Lord in this day's gospel. I will present to you a few reflections on these subjects.

When we say, that the example of our Saviour teaches us, that we are to show no respect of persons, we are not to be understood as speaking of distinctions in a *civil* point of view. In all that relates to the well-being of society—in all that relates to the right-ordering of governments, and the subordination of ranks, there is a respect of persons, which every Christian is bound to : and whosoever transgresses against the acknowledged rules of society, transgresses against the laws of God, and is an enemy to society. St. Paul lays it down as a duty, that we should render *tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom ; fear, to whom fear ; honour, to whom honour.* (Rom. xiii.) And our Lord himself, in the gospel of this day, ordains, that we should *give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.* By the command, therefore, that we should not respect the persons of men, is not meant, that we are to show no respect to those who are in authority over us,—that subjects are not to be obedient, in civil concerns, to their rulers,—children to their parents,—servants to their masters :—nor, in spiritual things, that the disciples of Christ are not to be in subjection to the guidance of their pastors, lawfully ordained, and lawfully

sent. Nothing at all of this is referred to in the command. The respect of persons, which is declared to be unworthy of a Christian, is of a different kind:—it is showing a respect to a fellow-creature, and making a distinction between one and another, when no distinction is required by the laws of society, and when no distinction ought to be made, according to the laws of God;—it is making a distinction on those occasions, when we ought to have God only before our eyes, and when his honour and glory, and the edification of our neighbours, ought solely to engross our attention.

With respect to the world, there is an inequality of rank and condition, instituted by God for the wisest purposes: and according to this inequality, the inferior is bound to pay due honour to the superior. But in spiritual things, all are equal. In the sight of God, the highest, according to the world, are not more acceptable than the lowest. In the sight of God, respectability, and real worth, are computable, not according to the value of fine clothes, ample possessions, or exalted titles, but according to the merit which each one is entitled to, on account of sincere piety, unfeigned love, and extended charity. The dignity of man is there to be weighed in the scales of unerring justice. When prostrate in the temple, where the majesty of his presence is venerated and adored, the outward trappings of the body are to be thrown off, and the decorations of the soul

alone attended to. Being at that time in the midst, as it were, of the whole court of heaven, we are to absent ourselves from the world for a time, and to entertain sentiments worthy of heaven. We are to look upon each individual congregated with us, in the same light, as far as human knowledge will extend, as he is looked upon by God: and we are to esteem him, in proportion as he is esteemed by that eternal Being, without any regard to worldly considerations. How far such or such a one may be acceptable in the sight of God, we cannot tell: but we are always to refrain from thinking evil, and to hope the best of every one. — In the house of God, therefore, *honour* is due, not to the worldly rich, or to the worldly wise, but to the humble and the simple, and those who are of a contrite heart: and to these, above others, we ought to be disposed to pay respect, were it possible for us to discern to whom these pious qualities are attributable. — In the house of God, *fear* is due, not to the worldly powerful, or to those who can only injure and kill the body, but to those servants of God, whose testimony, whose good example, or whose pious exhortations, will be brought forward at the last day, to justify the sentence of condemnation, which will be passed on the reprobate. These are the people to whom *honour* is due, and to whom *fear* is due, when we are assembled in prayer before the altar of God. I do not say, that we are to seek out the

good and the virtuous, in order to place them in the first seats, and exhibit them as the persons the most deserving of our respect and veneration. This would be more than is required. In fact, it would not be prudent : it would be judging before the time, and would oblige many, whose virtues are concealed from the eyes of men, with shame to take the lowest seats. All that is required is, that we treat in a becoming manner every one, whether poor or rich, and that we despise no one, however tattered his garments, lest perhaps, in his person, we despise a true and acceptable servant of the Most High, and one whose spiritual and real worth is far superior to our own.

Ah ! were our eyes to be opened on these public occasions, and were we permitted by the Almighty to behold the sanctity or the defilement of every soul that is associated with us in this place of worship : were we, moreover, to witness the marks of approbation, or of disgust, which are given to each, according to his merits, by the great Searcher of hearts, and his august attendants, with what reverence should we honour the just, without any distinction of wealth or poverty ! and with what disgust should we turn away from those, whether they were great or little, whose criminal state rendered them objects of contempt to all that are great and glorious in the kingdom of heaven. — These, however, are scenes, which we shall never behold with mortal eyes : and, conse-

quently, it will never be in our power to draw the line of distinction between the virtuous and the vicious, nor to say who amongst us will return home justified, rather than the other.

Now, as it is impossible for us to discriminate the good from the bad, the saint from the sinner, the Publican from the Pharisee, it is unworthy of a Christian to make distinction in the house of God on other accounts. It is unworthy of a Christian, to treat a fellow-creature with any kind of inward or outward disdain or haughtiness, merely on account of poverty, and to pay every kind of respect to another, merely because he possesses largely of the things of this world. *If there come into your assembly, says St. James, a man having a gold ring, and in good apparel; and there come in also a poor man in mean attire, and you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel, and say to him: SIT THOU HERE IN A GOOD PLACE: and to the poor man: STAND THOU THERE, or, SIT UNDER MY FOOT-STOOL: do you not judge within yourselves, and are become judges of unjust thoughts?* (James ii. 2, 3.) These are the words of St. James the Apostle: and in the same chapter, (ver. 9, 10.), he expresses, in strong terms, the guilt which is incurred by this respect of persons: *If you have respect to persons, you commit sin, being reprov'd by the law as transgressors. Now, whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.*

There is, however, a respect of persons, or a human respect of another kind, which is more criminal than the one of which I have been speaking ; I mean, a respect of persons, which induces us to court the company of the rich, without expressing our abhorrence of their vices and irregularities, at the time that we shun the company of others, who have transgressed against the rules of morality, merely because they are poor, or, at least, of little respectability, as to the things of this world. Such a distinction as this is unworthy of a Christian. The company, in which there is the most danger of being seduced by bad example, is the company of the rich worldling ; and the company of such men ought to be most carefully avoided. The men, who stand most in need of reproof, are generally the worldly proud, the high, the exalted ones of the earth. For a Christian, therefore, to witness in them the excesses of human depravity, and not dare to remonstrate with them, or in any way express his disapprobation of their conduct, proves, that his respect for men is greater than his regard for the honour and glory of God. Such conduct cannot be otherwise than criminal.—I do not pretend to say, that it is the duty of every one, on all occasions, to reprove those who are his superiors in rank and fortune. But there are frequently times and occasions, when a mild reproof, given either by words or actions, even by an inferior, may be productive of benefi-

cial effects, and then charity imposes it as a duty.

This obligation is more incumbent on some, than on others. The minister of God, the Pastor, who is placed over you, is obliged, by his ministry, to *reprove and correct, in season and out of season*, (2 Tim. iv.) rich as well as poor. And if he has respect of persons, and chastises some, and spares others, out of worldly motives, or because they are rich, he is deficient in his duty, and this his human respect is criminal. It is his office, to admonish all alike : and if he discovers the same fault in a rich person as in a poor person, in a friend as in an enemy, it is his duty to reprove the one with as great severity as the other. This is the duty of the Pastor: and this duty implies an obligation on the part of his flock, which, although not applying exactly to my present subject, is proper to be noticed :—I mean, the obligation of receiving his reproofs, not merely without taking offence, but with Christian meekness, considering it their duty to regulate their spiritual conduct according to his direction. There is not one amongst you, that would reverence a Pastor who did not do his duty. If, then, you expect that he should do his duty in regard to his flock in general, you certainly ought to consent that he should do his duty in regard to you individually ; for this most immediately concerns your own eternal welfare.

Exclusively of the Pastor, there are times and seasons when it is the duty of the laity to reprove their offending brethren.—The Christian, who hears the character of his neighbour defamed, and, through fear of giving offence, does not attempt to speak in his justification, or, at least, to stop the mouth of the uncharitable defamer, is undoubtedly guilty of the sin of *human respect*. —The Christian, who hears from the lips of his associates, immoral and loose discourse, and, through shame, or other motives, not only holds his peace, but by smiles, or other motions, seems to approve and encourage their proceedings, is certainly most criminally guilty of the sin of *human respect*.—The Christian, who associates with others, who are profane swearers, liars, drunkards, deceivers, or otherwise public transgressors, and, for fear of giving offence, takes no notice in their presence of their impiety, nor even gives a single token of his disapprobation of their wickedness, is, in the same manner, guilty of the crime of *human respect*.

Oh ! my brethren, how unworthy it is of a Christian to act in this manner ! Where is our love for God, if we can endure to see him insulted by our brethren, without making it the subject of our severest animadversions ? Who amongst us, would suffer a neighbour, or a friend, or even a brother, to insult his father, and not take his part, and repel their attacks ? Who amongst us, would sit down quietly, and

not say a word, when he saw a multitude of wretches grossly abusing him, who was more dear to him than any other person in the world? No, there is not one but would feel the ~~motives~~ ^{impulses} of indignation in his breast, and would exert every power to rescue his parent from obloquy, and repel the attacks of his enemies. And the reason would be, because we love our parent, our love would not suffer us to see him insulted with impunity.—If we loved God as sincerely as we love our temporal father, we certainly should act in the same manner, when we see him insulted. For God is our parent, and infinitely more entitled to that tender name, than he, whom we call our father according to the world. It is from him that we received our being:—it is in him that we live, move, and exist:—it is from him that we expect our eternal inheritance. To see him, therefore, grossly insulted by sinners, and to hold our peace, out of respect to his insulters, when prudence will allow that we should vindicate his honour, argues a want of that great virtue, which is the first and the chief commandment of the law, and without which, all other virtues and perfections are worth nothing in his sight:—it argues a want of divine love.

Oh! how ready are sinners to speak boldly in the cause of vice! how loudly do they exclaim in favour of the passions! how shamelessly do they extol the world and its pleasures!—how eloquently do they speak in favour of the object of their

carnal affections!—and with how little fear of giving offence, do they rail at the piety and devotional exercises of the good Christian even in his presence! And is it not a shame that the children of God should be daunted in the cause of virtue, when they see sinners undaunted in the cause of vice? Is it not a shame that Christians should be afraid to take the part of God, and to speak in his behalf, when they see sinners boldly and resolutely take the part of the devil, and vindicate his cause both by word and action?—Nevertheless, how frequently is this witnessed, even amongst those who pretend to a life of piety! A friend hesitates to admonish his friend of his failings, even when it can be done with prudence!—a brother sometimes is afraid to admonish his brother of the irregularities which he perceives in his conduct. And, what is more unaccountable, sometimes a parent, out of a mistaken fondness, neglects to admonish his own offspring of their faults, lest he should seem to thwart them, and make them sad: thus giving a formal preference to their own children, before the God who made them, and, by this preference, exposing both himself and children to the severity of God's judgments in the world to come.

It is not in this manner, my brethren, that God is served by his elect. Although prudence forbids that a person should indiscriminately interfere with people, with whom he is not acquainted, and reprove them, when he discovers

them in a fault ; yet a Christian would not be doing his duty, were he not to retire from the midst of wicked company, when he had reason to believe that it would be in vain to remonstrate against their excesses :—he would not be doing his duty, were he not to admonish of their failings those with whom he was intimate :—and he would not be doing his duty, were he a parent, or superior over others, if he did not immediately and duly chastise for their faults, those who were subject to them.

In the third place, there is a *human respect* of another kind—a respect, which is little better than a formal renouncement of our religion. I hope that this species of human respect is little known amongst us. This I know, that it is not generally witnessed amongst the generality of those who are separated from us. Witness the outward dress, and the manners of several dissenting congregations, in spite of the scoffs of those who dissent from them. The human respect, of which I speak, is refusing to speak openly in favour of our religion, when we hear it vilified by those, who know nothing at all about it ; or, transgressing against some one or other of its precepts, such as fasting or abstaining, lest it should be discovered by Protestants that we were Catholics, or lest the ignorant and unwise should scoff at our observances. We are all of us well assured of the truth of the Catholic religion. We know that it is the religion which

Christ instituted. We know that it began with Christ, that it has been the prevailing religion in the Christian world ever since that time, and that, according to the unerring promises of truth itself, it will be the true religion to the end of the world. Why then should we be ashamed of it? Our religion is our glory,—one of the greatest blessings that the Almighty has bestowed on us. And does not that person act an unmanly, ungenerous, and base part, who is ashamed to speak in its favour, when he hears it vilified by the unwise? May it not be said, that that person actually denies his religion and his faith, who absents himself from Mass, or who eats meat on fasting days, or who transgresses against any other of the commands, or observances of his religion, merely through fear of its being discovered that he is a Catholic? Truly such a man commits a crime of great enormity, and renders himself undeserving of the name, either of Catholic or Christian. He is a perfect hypocrite in things where hypocrisy is the most criminal and detestable.

The Christians, in the first ages of the Church, exposed themselves to the severest tortures, and to death itself, in its most horrible shapes, rather than give occasion to others to think that they were not Catholics. And if Christians of the present age, transgress against the laws of God and his Church, for fear it should be discovered that they are Catholics, is

it not too manifest that they are animated with a far different spirit from that of their ancestors ?

Be then upon your guard, my brethren, against the vice of human respect. Give honour to whom honour is due ; but do not vilify the Christian, in order to exalt the worldling. Give to Cæsar, what belongs to Cæsar : but at the same time do not neglect to give to God, what belongs to God. Pay that respect to the higher powers, which is their due : but at the same time pay due respect to virtue, and to the virtuous. Let no human considerations induce you to neglect the interests either of God, your neighbours, or your own souls. Be the strenuous advocates of morality, and of your religion at all times, and on all occasions, in the presence of the rich, as well as of the poor.—By this rule of conduct, you will draw down blessings on your own souls, and, whether or not you succeed in restraining the wickedness of others, you will be preparing yourselves for the inheritance, which *the Lord—the just Judge* has in store for his good and faithful servants.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

She said within herself: If I shall but touch his garments, I shall be healed..... MATT. ix. 21.

THE confidence, which the poor afflicted woman, as recorded in this day's gospel, placed in the power and mercy of Jesus, is an instructive lesson to Christians in distress: and the perfect cure, which she obtained, is an encouragement to them, to throw themselves without reserve into the arms of Him, whose mercies are beyond bounds, and whose power is without control.

During the time of our sojournment in this land of exile, we are encompassed with dangers on every side. We are travelling, as it were, through a trackless wilderness. The precipices, which we have to avoid, are almost innumerable, and frequently concealed from our view. The enemies, which we have to encounter, are powerful, are always on the watch,

and are determined to employ every stratagem to effect our destruction : and we often consider them as our friends.—Our powers of self-defence, or self-preservation are small, and in fact, totally inadequate to preserve us from these multiplied perils. If we go out from the right way, we cannot find it again, without direction from above. If we run into the snares, which are set for us, we have not power of our own to extricate ourselves. If we fall, we cannot rise again of our own strength. No created being can, of its own powers, render us any aid or assistance whatever. It is from God alone that strength must come. It is he alone, who can protect us from our enemies. It is he alone, who can direct us into the right road, and lead us on to our journey's end. If, therefore, this Omnipotent God is willing and ready to stretch out a hand to us in our necessities, is it not reasonable, that we should place confidence in him? Would it not be rash, would it not be presumptuous and criminal, to withdraw that confidence, and to rely either on ourselves, or on any other created being, in the time of danger or affliction?—I will call your attention to a few reflections on this subject.

God is the great Creator of all. *In his hand are all the ends of the earth.* (Ps. xciv.) He directs and governs all things. It is in him that every one of us lives, and moves, and exists. (*Acts xvii.*) We may indeed injure our-

selves, by acting in opposition to his commands: but not one of us can inflict an injury, or add to the afflictions of a fellow-creature, nor can others injure us, without the permission of our great and powerful Protector. Nothing can happen to us purely by chance. Every occurrence is foreseen by the God of all knowledge: and every thing that happens, is permitted so to happen by Him, who has regulated causes and effects from the beginning.—Whether it is, therefore, that we are afflicted with poverty, or that we are exposed to adversity:—whether it is that we are visited with sickness, or that we are tortured with bodily pains and sufferings:—whether it is that we are deprived of the consolation of friends, or that we are separated for ever in this life from the embraces of a dear parent or relative; it all happens by the permission of our heavenly Father. Whether it is that we are calumniated and slandered by enemies, or injured in our temporal concerns by their insidious machinations:—whether it is that we are exposed to persecutions, on account of our religion, or that we are assailed by the jeers and scoffs of the ignorant; it is all permitted so to happen by our Lord and Saviour. He is the great Regulator of all. Although we have it in our power to injure ourselves by sin, we cannot injure others, nor can others injure us, unless power is given from above for that purpose. Each one of us is under the special

eye of Providence, and not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without his concurrence. (*Luke xxi.*)—The power even of our mortal enemy, the devil, is restrained in this respect. He cannot assail us with temptations, unless leave be given to him. He cannot attack us in any manner, unless he be permitted so to do. Job was afflicted in the severest manner by the devil and his agents, and suffered as much as man could suffer. But none of these things were brought upon him, until permission had been solicited and obtained from the Almighty. In the same manner, permission must be given, before either the devil or his agents can offer the least violence to us. We are perfectly secured under the wings of his providence. He encompasses us about, as with a shield: and he watches over us, as a mother watches over her child.

— Every thing depending in this manner on the will of the Almighty, whom have we to fear but him? On whom have we to depend, but on him? To whom have we to look up, but to him? Were he a cruel and relentless Master, then we should have reason to tremble: then we should have reason to lament and repine, when those things came upon us which we feared: and the reason would be, because we should be sensible that we had fallen into the hands of one, who was a stranger to mercy. But we know that this God, on whom alone we depend, is a God of infinite mercy. We know

that he loves us with an unspeakable love. We know that he is desirous only of our good. We know that his wisdom is equal to his goodness, and that he knows what is best for us. We know that he will never despise *a contrite and humble heart*; (Ps. 1.) and that he will lead the man whose heart is truly contrite and humble, in the way, which is best calculated to lead him to that happy state for which he was originally intended.

Knowing that this is the disposition of our sovereign and almighty Protector and Defender, what have we to fear? If armies encompass us round about: if all the powers of earth and hell are labouring for our destruction, what reason have we to be alarmed? Shall he who trusteth in the Lord, ever be confounded? They can do nothing against us, but what he is pleased to allow them to do: and if he is pleased to allow them to injure us, either in our property, person, or reputation, as he was pleased to allow Satan to afflict Job, he will never allow them to touch our souls. And even these temporal injuries he will not suffer to be extended to greater lengths than will be profitable to our eternal interests. Our enemies will be only instruments in his hands, working (although against their will and intention) conjointly with him, in procuring for us the greatest blessings that can be possessed by man.

Look up then, my brethren, to your merciful Protector. Throw yourselves into his arms.

Live in such a manner, as that it may be said, that Christ liveth in you. Be not like the heathens who know not God. Be not like worldlings, who live as if there was no God. But be Christians indeed, placing an entire confidence in Him who made you; and receiving every thing as coming from his fatherly hand.

How noble is the character of the true Christian! How far exalted is he, above all the vicissitudes and miseries of this world! How serene and calm is his interior, under trials of the severest kind! When adversity comes upon him, he submits to it with perfect resignation; because he knows that it is sent by Him, who has no other object in view but his eternal welfare.—When he is visited by illness, he patiently endures it; because he knows that it is inflicted as a punishment by his tender Father, whom he has offended; and who chastises him in this world, in order that he may not be chastised in the next.—Were he reduced to poverty, and exposed to all the severities of want, he patiently endures it, because he knows that it is so ordained by the great Lord of all, and that his will is to be obeyed. He knows, moreover, that the things of this world are nothing in the scale of happiness, and that to love God, and to be beloved by God, will give greater satisfaction to the mind, than the possession of all the riches in the universe, without this love. He knows, likewise, that God will never leave him entirely destitute: that He, who clothes

the lilies of the field, and feeds the birds of the air, will give a sufficiency to the man, who seeks his kingdom and his justice, in preference to every thing else: and that this trial is sent him, for the express purpose of purifying his soul from all inordinate attachment to created things, and to prepare him for heaven. —When he is exposed to the envenomed shafts of detraction and calumny, when he is pursued by the rancorous malice of enemies, he is convinced that the mercies of God are at the bottom of all:—that it is he who permits them to assail him:—that they have no power to lift up a hand against him, or to open their lips to defame him, until it be given to them from above:—and that when this power is given, it is given for the purpose of providing him with means of proving his fidelity to God, and making atonement for the repeated insults, which he has offered to him by his former sins:—and consequently, he is convinced that these trials are blessings, sent by God in order to prepare him for the society of the angels and saints in the mansions of eternal peace. —When he is assailed by the violent attacks of his mortal enemy—the devil, his confidence is not shaken. He knows that limits are fixed to the power of the evil tempter:—that God watches over him with parental care:—that grace is given to him sufficient to ensure victory over the most violent temptations:—and that these trials are permitted for the purpose of enriching his crown

of glory, by adding to his rewards.—When public calamities take place, such as plagues, famine, war, &c. his heart is not dismayed : he is peaceable and calm in his own interior. He knows, that these calamities do not happen without the express permission of God. He knows, that they are intended to promote the honour and glory of his holy name, either by manifesting his justice, for the purpose of converting sinners, or by perfecting the virtues of his faithful servants, and preparing them for their crown.—In a word, let whatever will happen, his soul is always in peace. He partakes, in some degree, of the immutability of his divine Protector. He looks down upon the vicissitudes and troubles of this world, as upon a scene represented before him, on which is described the invisible agency of God over the ways and destinies of men : he looks down upon it, as from an eminence ; and he rejoices in the security, which arises from his well-founded confidence in the mercies and protection of his omnipotent Creator.

What character, my brethren, can be more noble, more magnanimous, more praise-worthy, than this of the true Christian ! What scene can be more pleasing, more sublime, than to behold a fellow-mortal unmoved by the tempestuous billows of the world, defying their utmost fury, and standing firm and undaunted in the midst of the waves, which swallow up the far greater portion of the children of men !

I do not mean to assert, that the perfect Christian is free from every kind of solicitude. No : there is a certain solicitude which he feels, and this is an earnest solicitude to serve his Maker, and to avoid the paths of iniquity. This solicitude he constantly feels ; and it induces him to labour with unremitting assiduity, in the performance of his duties to God and his neighbour. If, through the infirmity of human nature, he is led into a fault, this solicitude induces him to apply with earnestness to the throne of mercy, and not to desist until he has reason to hope that his repentance is accepted, and his pardon granted. In fact, without this solicitude, it would be impossible to enjoy that perfect confidence in the will of God, and that calm contentment in the midst of sufferings and afflictions, which I have been describing.

Thus, my brethren, you see the state of dependency in which we are on God,—the impossibility of any thing evil coming upon us, without his concurrence,—the impossibility of our evading the trials and chastisements which he has allotted to us,—the infinite goodness, with which he seeks our welfare in all things, and the magnanimity and happiness of the soul, which is submissive to him through motives of piety and love. The description is pleasing ; and I fondly hope, that there is not one amongst you but would be glad, were he practically convinced of the truth of it. But, alas ! how few are there, even amongst the

more perfect, of whom it can be said, that the will of God is the sole rule, both of their actions and desires ?——In the majority of mankind, very little of this kind is to be looked for. But we have nothing to do with the majority. We have only to look to ourselves, and to seek to walk in the narrow path, which is found only by a few. How is it, therefore, that we submit to the will of God ? Do we look up to him, as the great regulator of all that comes upon us ? and do we submit to his ordinances willingly and cheerfully ? or do we conduct ourselves, as if chance, or, we may call it, *fate*, regulated events, without any interference of the hand of an all-merciful God.—Of this, each one must judge, by the feelings which he suffers to preponderate in his mind.—If there is one amongst you, who, in the midst of adversity and affliction, repines, mourns, loses his temper, becomes melancholy, and, what is not unfrequent, runs into excesses, in order to drown his cares, and forget his sorrows, such a one does not look up to God as his protector, and as the regulator of human events.—If there is one amongst you, who, when visited with pains of body, either of short, or of long continuance, is habitually impatient under them, morose, fretful, always complaining, and lamenting over his unhappy lot, can we say, that such a one considers God as the great dispenser of trials and afflictions ? Can we say,

that he places an entire confidence in God, and receives chastisement from his hand, in the spirit of penance, and with gratitude and thanksgiving, considering it as a commutation of temporal punishment, in place of the eternal torments, which his sins had deserved? Can we say, that he acknowledges God to be infinitely good, and that he watches over him with parental care? — If there is one amongst you, who, when vilified, or calumniated by men ~~justly~~, and unjustly (it is, when it is on account of your religion, your country, or for any thing that is not criminal on your part, gives way to the motions of anger, and vents his rage, either by reproachful language, and returning calumny for calumny, or by harbouring the secret feelings of hatred, animosity, or revenge; can we say that that man acknowledges himself to be under the immediate protection of heaven, and that he believes, that nothing can happen to him without the permission of the Almighty?

Alas! how many are there, and probably even in this assembly, who by their actions seem to declare, that their own will ought to decide upon every thing which is to happen to them, and that the will of God ought to bend to it; and who, by their murmurings and complaints, seem to think that God is not actuated towards them by the feelings of benevolence and love; and that, in his dispensations, he

either does not consult, or does not know, what will be advantageous to them, and conducive to their eternal welfare !

Whoever there may be in this assembly, whose consciences accuse them of this want of confidence, let me admonish them of their fault, and exhort them to throw themselves, without delay, and without reserve, into the arms of their Creator. Let me again remind them, that nothing will befall them without his permission, and that nothing will come upon them, but what is intended for their good, and may be made to promote the sanctification of their souls. Upon obstinate sinners, I acknowledge, that the judgments of an avenging God are frequently hurled, without a moment's notice, and their miserable souls consigned to their eternal doom. But nothing of this kind happens to the sincere followers of the gospel. Nothing, either sudden, or of protracted duration, happens to him, but what is intended for his good.—Have your eyes, therefore, fixed on God alone, and have no other will but his. Receive good things from his hands with thankfulness, and receive also evil things with readiness and submission. Let it be your chief desire, to avoid sin, and your chief solicitude, to atone to his justice for past sins, by bearing patiently the sufferings, which he shall be pleased to impose upon you. In every place, and in every circumstance, imagine to yourselves, that you see your God, that you feel your

God, and that you enjoy your God. Thus will you place your whole trust and confidence in him ; and, according to his express promise, you will never be confounded, in your hopes of possessing that ineffable and eternal happiness, which he says has been prepared for his faithful servants from the foundation of the world.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ON THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE LAWS OF GOD.

*Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.....*MATT. xxiv. 25.

THE concluding sentence of this day's gospel, which I have taken for my text, is a sentence, which is not only applicable to the prophetic declaration of our Lord, respecting the calamitous events, which are to precede the dissolution of this corruptible world, but applies likewise to all the words, to all the doctrines, to all the commands, and to all the threats, which proceeded from the lips of Him, who is in his own nature unchangeable and eternal. They all partake of the same immutability, and it may be said of the one as well as of the other: *heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* The heavens shall melt away like wax, the earth shall be consumed by fire, but my word shall remain.

Yes, my brethren, the word of the Lord remaineth for ever. All, whatsoever he has declared, whether relating to the mysteries of faith, or to the duties of morality, shall be irrevocable and irresistible for ever. And the reason is, because his doctrines are truth itself: and truth being as unchangeable as the Deity, from whom it emanates, it must, of necessity, continue the same unto the end. In him there can be no alteration, neither can there be in his words.

This subject, my brethren, claims your most serious attention. For, if the laws of God be immutable, as they undoubtedly are, it follows, of course, that the laws, which were imposed on the primitive Christians, and by which they were judged, are imposed likewise on us, and are the same by which we also shall be judged. When, therefore, we reflect on the sanctity of these our ancestors in the faith, and compare it with the tepidity and indifference, which so generally prevail, and which we too frequently feel within ourselves: and when we consider, that their sanctity consisted only in the strict observance of laws, which are equally imposed on us, what serious causes have we for alarm, and what powerful inducements to enter into ourselves without delay, and to live henceforward in the manner, in which we shall wish to have lived, when we appear before his awful tribunal.—Be attentive to the few reflections, which present them-

selves to my mind, on this subject. They will be applicable, in a greater or less degree, to every one of you. Let me, however, observe, that I wish not to dishearten you, by exaggerating the obligations incumbent on you; but to impress on your minds the necessity of studying the nature of the laws of God, and of fulfilling them to their utmost extent: for, as my text declares, *heaven and earth*, that is, all created things, how dear, valuable, or wonderful soever they appear to us in this world, *shall pass away, but the words of the law, by which you shall be judged, shall never pass away.*

In the state in which we are, in this land of darkness and exile, we cannot, by any powers of our own, although we may be gifted with the most eminent talents, and apply to the subject with the most intense study, discover any thing that belongs to the next world. There is an impenetrable veil thrown over the things of eternity, which it is impossible for man to remove. The only means, by which knowledge is to be obtained of what will happen beyond the grave, is to be found in the communications, which the Almighty, in his infinite mercy, has been pleased to make to man. These communications he made to the patriarchs and prophets in the Old Law, and to the apostles in the New. They have been all handed down to us, for our instruction, and are, for the most part, contained in the book, which we call the written word of God. Since the time of the

apostles, no new communications have been made to men. He does not speak to us now in an *audible voice*, as he formerly spoke to Abraham and Moses ; nor does he speak *interiorly* to any one, for the purpose of communicating any article of faith, or point of morality, hitherto unknown, or enacting any law, hitherto not promulgated, or annulling any command, hitherto in force : but, *having formerly spoken to the Prophets*, as St. Paul expresses it, (Heb. i.) *and last of all to his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world*, he commands that these communications be laws and regulations for all future ages : and that all men attend to them, and fulfil them with the same readiness and exactness, as if they had heard them from his own mouth. To remove every shadow of doubt concerning them, he has established their authenticity on the firmest foundations. In fact, we may say of them, in the words of our Lord himself, if a man *refuse to believe Moses and the Prophets*, to which we may add, the Church existing in all ages and nations, *neither would he believe, were a man to rise again from the dead.*

This is the importance of the word of God, as it is delivered to us in the written books of the Scriptures, or handed down to us from the Apostles, by the universal testimony of all ages and nations, which is called *Tradition* : and here it is that we are to obtain information concerning the truths of eternity, and the com-

mands, which the Almighty wills should be observed.

From these observations we are to collect, that the doctrine of the inspired word, is the doctrine of salvation ;—that every mystery or article of Faith which it contains, is to be believed, and every command which it enjoins, is of necessity to be fulfilled by every individual ;—that the Almighty will not, and that man cannot, make any alteration in this doctrine ;—that it is not in the power of any created being to annul any command, or to authorise any individual to transgress against it ;—and that no mitigation of any of them, will ever be produced by change of times or ages, of manners or customs.

With respect to the first, namely, that every mystery, or article of faith is to be believed, we can speak of it only in general terms. Addressing myself, as I am, to members of the great Church of all ages and nations, it will not be necessary for me to enumerate these articles, nor to point out where they are to be learnt : for with all this you have been acquainted from your younger years. My present purpose requires me only to say, that the mysteries of Faith are always the same ;—that man can neither add to them, nor take away from them, without incurring damnation ;—that what they were yesterday, they are to-day ;—that what they were a thousand years ago, they are the same now, and will be the same to end—

ousness of having done wrong, there is sufficient evidence for condemnation against them, when they appear before Him, who implanted those feelings in their hearts.

But I am not now speaking to people of that description. An argument, however, may be drawn from it, and we may say, that, if the non-observance of the essential moral duties of the Law will not be excused in unbelievers, much less will it be excused in those who are the children of the Promise, who have no prejudices of education to surmount; who have the whole light of the gospel shining upon them, without the least cloud intervening. No: the fulfilment of them all will be strictly required, and judgment without mercy, will be the lot of every one of them, who shall be found wanting, when put into the scales. Change of times and manners, will not be admitted as a plea, either of excuse, or of mitigation of punishment. The same severity will be exercised towards Christians of these times, as was exercised towards those, who lived in the age when piety and fervour were most exemplary. In fact, how can it be otherwise, consistently with the justice and sanctity of God? Can sin ever be less hateful in his sight than it was in the beginning, when he drove the apostate angels out of heaven, or when he drove our first parents out of paradise, or when he expired in agonizing tortures on the cross? Can he ever be less jealous of his sanctity than he was, when he declared, that no-

thing defiled should enter heaven? Is there any reason to suppose that he will ever allow a rival on his throne, and admit him to his embraces, who has not loved him with his whole heart, nor served him with his whole strength? Will there ever be a time, when he will hold him guiltless, who fixes his affections chiefly on earthly things, who seeks his comfort here, and who is, in every sense of the word, a professed worldling? Will he ever allow the attribute of his justice to be injured by men, with impunity, and take notice of frauds, impositions, and oppressions? Will he ever allow judgment to be taken out of his hands, and authorise hatreds, animosities, and the desires of revenge? Will he ever reverse the following sentence: *so shall my heavenly Father do to you, unless you forgive every one his brother, from your hearts?* (Matt. xviii.) Will there ever be a time, when the kingdom of heaven shall not suffer violence; when the gate shall not be narrow that leadeth to life, or when the ways of the world, shall be called the ways of God? Shall there ever be a time, when others shall be saved, besides those who persevere to the end?

No: my brethren, nothing of all this will ever take place. It is our duty, as it has been the duty of all Christians in preceding ages, to become perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect: and no other means are there of becoming perfect, than by fulfilling all the duties of the laws of God, without exception. No human

authority, or custom, can lessen the obligation, or mitigate the severity of them, in favour of any one. They are truth itself, and the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.

Considering the general decay of piety, and the depravity of morals, which has succeeded to the sanctity, which formerly illustrated the Christian name, the above account must excite alarm in your breasts: "What," you will say, "if all that is commanded by the laws of God is to be strictly observed, and if the justice of God be inexorable against all those who transgress, and who do not bring forth worthy fruits of repentance, what will be the eternal lot of the far greater part of mankind? May we not hope, that mercy will preponderate over justice?" Such hope as this, is certainly not criminal, provided it does not encourage us to live on in the state of sin, on the supposition of finding mercy hereafter.—But, farther than *hope*, we cannot go. Glad should we be, were the gates of heaven to receive all and every one of our fellow-creatures. We feel for ourselves, and for our brethren: and such feelings are honourable. But the word of God is the law; and by that law every man shall be tried.—This being the case, what encouragement have we to hope, that there will not be a strict dispensation of reward or punishment, according as this law has been observed or violated? Is there any probability that the Almighty will swerve from his solemn declaration? or, that he

did not intend that his word should be taken in its strict sense? No: *his word shall never pass away*. What he has said, he has said: and he will never depart from it. He has spoken plainly and openly. He had no intention of deceiving us, by wording his law in severer terms than was necessary. He did not command a great deal, merely that we should be terrified to do a little. All, and every one of his precepts, are to be observed; and he that offends against one, as St. James says, (ii. 10.), becomes guilty of all, and will be punished accordingly. It is not for us to say: "What, then, will become of the generality of mankind?" We know, that God will not act unjustly towards any one, and therefore we may securely leave justice and judgment to him. Without, however, scrutinizing too minutely into the destiny of others, we may safely come to this conclusion respecting ourselves, that, unless we fulfil the will of God in all things, or do condign penance for our transgressions, we shall not be of the number of the saved.

But, may not a hope be entertained, that, on account of the decay of piety, and the general change of customs and manners, some little allowance will be made in favour of those who are not such exact observers of the law, as they were in former times? By no means. Truth, my brethren, is always truth. There is no change in God, nor will there be in any of his laws. The duties, which he imposed on

the primitive Christians, he has imposed on us, and he will impose them on all Christians to the end of time. In fact, why should we be treated with more lenity, than were our ancestors in the faith? Would it prove any thing in our favour, or show that we were entitled to consideration on the part of God, were we to say, that we merely followed the ways of the generality of mankind,—that we were less devout, less fervent, less watchful over our moral conduct, more attached to creatures, more eager after pleasures and amusements, than our forefathers were, because other Christians were the same? Alas! this would be pleading for mercy, not on the score of innocence, but on the score of the multiplicity and enormity of our transgressions. This would be attempting to justify rebellion, not because it was attended with no serious consequences, but because it was general amongst all the subjects of God. How opposite is such a plea both to reason and justice. No : my brethren, were there only one prevaricator amongst all the children of Adam, like Judas amongst the apostles, or were all mankind, not one even excepted, to corrupt their ways, the judgments of God would fall with equal severity upon the whole mass of human kind, as upon the single individual.

Reflect, my brethren, on these few remarks. They contain, I acknowledge, serious causes for alarm : but they are truths, delivered by God himself, Be not, however, disheartened,

They are alarming only to the worldling. To the man, who sincerely loves God, and who seeks to please him in his actions, and thoughts, and desires, they are far otherwise. The love of God sweetens all things, and confidence in his paternal providence renders every thing easy. Love God, therefore, and you will love his laws. Apply to him with fervour for his protecting grace, and you will find, that his *yoke is sweet, and his burthen light*. (Matt. xi.) Be as earnest to fulfil his will, as were the first Christians, and you will become as perfect as they were. Do this, and you will find that, in the same manner as God is unchangeable in his laws, he is unchangeable in his promises; and that he will, according to his word, grant a crown of immortal glory to every one of his servants, who perseveres faithfully to the end.



ERRATA ET CORRIGENDA.

Page.	line.
22,	11, <i>for retained, read reclaimed.</i>
36,	3, <i>from bottom, for hearts, read heads.</i>
163,	3, <i>for parents, read children.</i>
164,	10, <i>from bottom, for in, read to.</i>
245,	30, <i>for distant, read distinct.</i>
256,	22, <i>for what may not, read what may, or may not.</i>
263,	14, <i>for from what, read from whom.</i>
273,	3, <i>from bottom, after footsteps, add of their Lord.</i>
386,	10, <i>after affronts, add I will prove.</i>
437,	4, <i>for motives, read motions.</i>

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